

## OLIVIA NEWSLETTER

#4

Dear Distributors:

We've got lots of goodies in this issue. I think you'll find some of Betsy's suggestions on organizing the business end of distribution helpful. Also, I've included a list of production groups which you may find useful if you or someone you know is producing or touring. I'll include updates in future newsletters as I receive them.

Some of you have expressed a desire to see distributors have input into the selection of artists recorded by Olivia. If any of you have concrete suggestions on how this could be accomplished in a reasonable fashion, please submit them. With distributors spread out all over the country, I suspect that organizing a system to do this will be one big job. You also might think of this problem in terms of knowledge of music, amount of responsibility in relationship to amount of input, individual tastes, different types of markets; i.e., conservative, liberal, radical, etc., etc.

Remember, if something is happening or going to happen in your community that you think women from other areas might be interested in, please send in a blurb (it doesn't have to be an essay) and I'll put it in the next newsletter.

Getting the newsletter out is great fun, but also some work. For someone who doesn't type, I do pretty good. Actually, Gail Vinson, who is the Coordinator of the Rape Crisis Center where I work, does all the typing and without her expertise the newsletter would probably appear once every leap year. Thanks, Gail. (you're welcome, Sandy).

Sandy

### WHO WE ARE

#### Fan Fernow - Atlanta, Georgia

I haven't had to describe myself in writing since I was in the 8th grade and I can't even begin to describe how much I have changed since then.

I'm 22...a native of Buffalo, New York...living in Atlanta for the snowless weather and the 15¢ bus rides. I live in a house named Satin Sheets with 3 other women...3 dogs... 1 cat...and 1 catfish...

At the moment I'm unemployed in the "government sense" so I am able to collect unemployment and work full time on movement work like distributing for Olivia, doing production work with a 3 woman production company (Princess Charming Productions), and working with Red Dyke Theatre. I'm also in the process of arranging a Southern tour for my friend Teresa Trull.

I'm a photographer, a tee-shirt collector...an ex-drinker-smoker...taurus-gemini...who is so scatterbrained at times that I have to wear my keys around my neck so that I don't lose them.

#### Janet Hampton - Richmond, Virginia

I was born and raised in the South (Tenn.). Grew up loving horses and was lucky enough during those years to have one. I went to college in N.C., a private Methodist College where I was interested in all the things young co-eds are supposed to be interested in, i.e., "boys," frats, sororities, campus christianity, etc. Began seeing my way clear of some of that by my senior year. After graduating, although I had lots more interest in religion and philosophy than in my major (biology), I worked for a year in a hospital. Decided on graduate school in human nutrition and have been at VPI in Va. for the past 2 years. Began getting involved with women and the movement during that time which really brought my consciousness into awareness about so many things. I heard Meg's album at the Women's Center 1 night and the rest was inevitable! I had to get involved! I am excited over the opportunity to work with Olivia.

### PROMO ALBUMS

Thelma in Chicago sends in a suggestion on promos. We need to find a way to identify promo records. Reason - I found a Mooncircle promo album which by mistake I had marked - in the sale bin of one of our more respectable overground record stores. They said there was a confusion - you know, "poor communication." I found out this is not that unusual, but of course it means they get to sell retail a record they got free.

What I will do is cut the top right corner and, of course, remove the cello. Unless someone has other ideas.

## BARS, COFFEE HOUSES, and LISTENING PARTIES

The newsletter was not actually flooded with mail on these subjects. If you have suggestions on how to get Olivia records on jukeboxes in bars (straight or gay), coffee houses, etc., please share. Some of the distributors are running into difficulties in this area. Also, let's hear from you who have had listening parties to make women aware of Olivia's music. This type of get together can really spread the word in your community and might reach women who either don't go to the bars, etc. or listen to the radio. Copies of albums used for this purpose could be written off as a promo album so you don't have to wear out your own personal copy. This is a great way to share women's music and energy and have a great time doing it.

INFORMATION GATHERING AND FUTURE PLANNING - The following is a letter submitted by BETSY YORK in Boston. Now with my 1st moment to take care of the other part of my life which isn't school, I would like to pass on some thoughts and questions which have been both brewing in me and sparked by the east coast distributors' meeting. It was nice to see everyone at the meeting, but we could have done so much more. After distributing for over a year, I realize that there is a lot of information I could have gathered which would have been helpful in the future for Olivia. Olivia is a great IDEA but it is also a business and it really has little idea of who she is selling to. I have no idea, for example, just how large the Boston market can go. Of course, we like to think everywoman will buy one and perhaps every woman will someday. For right now, it seems to me that some concrete information gathering and future planning will benefit Olivia in L.A. in regards to production, time schedules, selection of artists and combinations of albums, and will help us as distributors in both planning concerts and selling as many as we can. There are just some immediate thoughts on both the distributors' meeting and for the future:

Planning - Written plan of action for next 6 months considering seasonal activities such as school and Christmas. Then discuss each.

Statement of Environment - What is your area like so far. Those with similar ones share everything that you've done. Don't assume everyone has generally done the same things. Discuss the outcome and effectiveness and analyze for future use. Work on new ideas.

Selling - How do you operate?

- 1) Record keeping
- 2) Mailing list for yourself
- 3) Secretarial issues
  - a) copies of monthly forms
  - b) inventory records
  - c) files - reference, correspondence copies
- 4) mail advertising - reaching new stores, scouting, sending letters, information, and contacts.
- 5) Appointments
  - a) How much do you compromise - role play?
    1. clothes
    2. attitude
    3. dealing with men.
  - b) What is goal?
    1. deal with whoever, however, to get records in store;
    2. Continue ideal policies; if you run into problems point up and discuss, if not settled then not sell?
    3. other.
- 6) Give away albums and promo 45's uses

Advertising - different populations - different ways? Radio, tv, papers above & underground, festivals, conferences, meetings, special radio shows.

New Areas Within Your Area - Where can you expand?

More Bureaucracy - Area representatives?

Commitment - Time you give. Really analyze your present situation and time you have, time you can give, how much can you do? Set plan realistically and see if it really helps Olivia - making sales.

Expenses - Keep records of out of pocket cost and hours

- 1) in order to get an idea of what a salary would be based on
- 2) to see how commissions % relates to costs.

People:

- 1) Who are Olivia's or your friends or enemies?
- 2) What opportunities can we use?
- 3) Role of distributor:
  - a) How often confronted as spokesperson?
  - b) What are questions or accusations? Replies?  
Examples: 1) lousy productions; 2) ripping women off (\$5.50); 3) squeek of frets? 4. What's next? 5. Does so and so have a lover? 6. Why not recording \_\_\_\_\_?

Effect of More Records - Bigger inventory. I find requests are going up - with 3 out more reputable, all sales more and I think will increase with more - relate this to your perception of population and commitment.

Keep overview and records of sales for each album - start to see any trends - collect information.

I hope-to hear some responses.

/s/ Betsy York

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PERSONALS

Mary Farmer - Is that really you in JEB's new calendar?

Response to Margie Adam's Interview

First, let me premise this with the statement that I am not a musician and what I know about music could be written on one side of a pick. Despite this lack of knowledge, I still feel compelled to respond to some aspects of Margie's article.

Musicians like most people do not exist or develop in a vacuum. Everyone is a "victim" of their environment to some extent. I would imagine for musicians that this environment would include teachers, regional bias, availability of other musicians' music, and reinforcement of their own music. If there is a women's collective musical unconscious form it has little impact on women's music or woman's culture if it remains unconscious.

As women musicians begin to share and learn from each other, then I think a collective musical consciousness develops. Their music receives validation it had not received. Hopefully, there is a merging of the woman and her music. Herein lies the tremendous strength and power of woman-identified music.

In regards to "...the same artistic pool of expressive potential that is available to all women by virtue of the uniqueness of woman..." my reaction is that this sounds like middle-class bull shit, mainly because I can't figure out what in the world it's supposed to mean. Is this artistic pool available to all women, even me, or just to musicians who often, by virtue of class advantages, have been able to develop some talent and have the where-with-all to reach into this pool?

I agree with much of what Margie says, not that my agreeing makes it right or correct. Our evolution is happening now and our music, like Margie points out, is much deeper and bigger than singular issues; i.e., political line, style, or artist. I hope we continue to examine this evolution and its meaning to woman's culture.

Sandy Ramsey

PRODUCTION GROUPS

Name: Artemis Productions

Kinds of productions: Boston's First Women's Music Festival

Address: c/o New Words Bookstore or c/o Betsy York  
419 Washington St. 164 Ferncroft Rd.  
Somerville, Mass. 02143 Milton, Mass. 02186

Name: Tomatoe Productions

Kinds of productions: concerts, films, dances, etc.

Address: 718 Leland, #2 or c/o Joan Ellis -Sappha  
St. Louis, Mo. 63130 4531 Chouteau, #1N  
St. Louis, Mo. 63110

Name: Woman's Soul Productions

Kinds of productions: concerts, films

Address: c/o Debbie St. Charles  
2423 N. Bremen  
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Name: The Women's Social Club

Kinds of productions: music, films

address: c/o Laurie Ryan & Peg Johnston  
125 Mary St.  
Binghamton, N. Y. 13903

## Production Groups (cont.)

### Siren Productions

Kinds of Productions: concerts, films

Address: c/o Linda McCreary & Betsy Stacy  
402 Clarke Rd., S. W.  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87105

### More on Tomato Productions:

We started producing women's events in December 1974 with a Meg Christian concert. Since then we have brought the Ethel Mertz Band; Berkeley Women's Music Collective; Z Budapest; Margie Adam; Jean Mackey and Mary Trevor; and Kay Gardner. Cassie Culver will be here in late February and Mimi Baczewski, a St. Louis musician, will be performing that same evening. We are negotiating a date with Chris Williamson and hope to bring the Ethel Mertz band back to St. Louis this spring. Will also be producing the films distributed by Moonforce Media, in April. We have learned a great deal since that first concert, and support from the St. Louis women's community has been terrific. Money, space, and equipment are always problems, but we have arranged contracts with women at a local university which have made these three areas of production work less of an obstacle. Women's music lives in St. Louis.

I think the concerts we have produced have had a great effect on record sales. Live woman music has brought St. Louis women together in a way nothing else has; as a true cultural revolution/celebration, a women's concert is a powerful thing. Due to the concerts, more women are hearing about Olivia Records (I give a sales pitch), and the campus bookstore has started carrying records, as well as another local bookstore, and a people-oriented record store (as opposed to profit), all within a mile from one another. I do almost all wholesale distributing now, referring people to the stores. This makes it easier for me with my consistently over-scheduled life, and keeps the stores invested in buying Olivia Records. So, all in all, I'll say it again, Women's Music lives in St. Louis. Blessed Be.

/s/ Joan Ellis-Sappha

New Distributors - Welcome! Hope each of you will share a little about yourselves with all the women of Olivia:

Thelma Norris - working with Nancy Katz in Chicago  
Cath Quinn and Casey Caldwell - working with Lynette Jerry in New Orleans  
Libby Atkins and Connie Griffin (Womanchief) in Boulder, Colo.  
Anna Peck in Seattle  
Robin Linden in Santa Cruz, Calif.  
Judy Lerner in Baltimore  
Carolee Kamlager and Bonnie Spenser in Clearfield, Kentucky.  
Debbie Doyle in Champaign, Illinois  
Janet Hampton - working with Raine in Richmond, Va.  
Natalie Lando in Oakland.

### NEWS FROM GINNY

Due to the tremendous work load of everyone in L.A., future regional or area distributors' meetings will have to be organized by the distributors.

If you would be interested in holding a meeting for your area, contact me and I will send you the names and addresses of the distributors in your area. Olivia will provide money for postage and also send someone from L.A. to the meeting.

Women in Distribution (WinD), a group of women in Washington, DC, which has been trying to set up a wholesale distribution system for feminist products, has asked once again to distribute our records on a non-exclusive basis. Although their letter to us did not contain many details, it seems that they would be selling our records to stores and colleges at a higher rate than the one you all sell for, so that the element of competing with ourselves would not be an issue. WinD says that, in general, they don't think they would be setting up competition, but they don't say why. Maybe they're thinking that they do most of their sales (or enough of them) in places where we don't have distributors. This is something we need to find out from them. By the way, they are a mail-order business. They also distribute, non-exclusively, Lavendar Jane, Willie Tyson, and one of Malvina Reynolds' records.

The question to us is not simply a matter of having as many women as possible selling our records. We see our distribution network (i.e., you all) as being more than sellers, so the question is not just can they sell additional records. Presumably they can. The questions we are wondering about are how much are they going to undercut what you're doing? Will a women's store, or college store in your area prefer to make one order for all their records to one place, deal with one set of billing, have all their records come at one time

even if they have to pay a little more for their Olivia records than if you sold them to the store? How are you going to feel if, say, WinD gets to a store first, sets up an account with them, and then you go to the store offering the same products at less money and with same day delivery? Are you going to feel like you're competing in a way that you don't want to be with another women's business? How are you going to feel about that? Do you feel like it would be a benefit or a detriment to Olivia to have so many different groups selling our records? Any other thoughts on the matter would be greatly appreciated, and as soon as you can so we can let WinD know what our decision is.

This next item has to do with something that came up in a conversation I had with Paule Kwasniewski, our Santa Barbara distributor, and has to do with distributors in small places, or, as we affectionately call them, small distributors. (Nancy Katz, where is your play about short oppression now that we need it). OK. Here is the problem. There are a number of distributors who are working in little towns, or are in bigger places, but in either case are doing very little Olivia business--maybe selling a few retail records a month only. There are 2 problems from our 3rd--1st, the load of paper work we have to do for every distributor, no matter how many records she sells; and, 2nd, the amount of inventory these small distributors tie up over a long period of time. Now lets assume that the reason the small distributors are small is not because they're incompetent, but because they live in sleepy little places that don't even know what women are, never mind women's music, never mind lesbians. So the problem is not, change the distributor (although that may be the solution in some places, but in most I don't think it is so let's assume it's not). So what should we do?

Small distributors, what do you think? What are you getting out of doing Olivia? (Since it's clearly not the money). Are there other ways that you could get out of it whatever it is you get out of it?

When Paule and I talked, we said that maybe it made more sense to have one distributor cover a larger area than having 3 or 4 women working in tiny places. The one problem with this set-up, though, is that in those little places, where there are no established women's centers, and straight stores might not want to carry records, there would be no place for the out-of-town distributor to work from. So maybe the answer to that is to set up the women in the small places with lots of order blanks, with their initials on them. Then, when someone ordered a record from us with the initials QQ, we would know to credit distributor QQ with the sale. That way we wouldn't have the paper work involved with having a full-fledged distributorship, and we wouldn't have the problem of the inventory tie up. The disadvantage of this system is that it means that most distributors are never going to make very much money, and one of our goals is to make this a self-supporting system.

Another advantage to having lots of women in little places, rather than a few women covering lots of territory, is the degree to which you all represent the concepts of Olivia in your communities. I know that many of you, because of your Olivia connection, have become involved in concert production, radio production, and other forms of community organizing around cultural/political issues, and this is real important to us. The fewer distributors we have, the fewer opportunities there will be to make this connection. (This does not mean that Olivia is the only connection; only that I know for lots of you it has been the main one).

This is not a decision which needs to be made tonight. I would really appreciate your thinking about it. If you can come up with other alternatives than the ones I've mentioned, please do.

Big distributors, there are some questions for you to consider, too. If you did have more territory to cover, would you want to do it? If you could make a living distributing for Olivia, would you? If you were to expand and go into the little places, how would you make contact with the women there, assuming there is no established base already? What do you want to be when you grow up?

I guess that's all from me. We all love you all.

/s/ Ginny

NEXT ISSUE - DEADLINE APRIL 15th

1. Bio-sketches from new distributors (and old ones who haven't done one).
2. Feedback on articles in this issue.
3. Personals.
4. Problems or suggestions regarding distribution.
5. Info on production groups or performers looking for such groups.
6. Upcoming events in your community which may be of interest to other women.
7. Hello - I know you're out there, I've got your zip codes!