

### Interview with Tony Camillo

- Q:** Tony, last I spoke with you was in January of 1978 for a Producer's Spotlight. I believe you had just set up Venture Records then, bring me up to date from there.
- A:** Well actually, I had the production company since I started in the record business. After working with the Holland-Dozier-Holland situation I came back to New York. In Detroit I had done some production work with a girl named Sandra Richardson and was able to sell it to Neil Bogart at Buddah Records. It's funny how that worked out because one of the songs that I did on that label with Sandra was a song that Gladys Knight later chose to do and became the title of her second album, "I Feel A Song".
- Q:** That was just an independent production agreement, When did you start the label?
- A:** I met my present partner Cecile Barker while I was in Detroit recording Peaches & Herb. He was married to Francine, who was Peaches back then. He was managing them as well, and we struck up a friendship.
- Q:** When was that?
- A:** That was about 1971-72. I didn't know, but found out later, that he was also a physicist. As a matter of fact, he was with NASA at the time and was managing Peaches & Herb as a side situation. As our friendship developed Cecile eventually asked me if I'd like to form a record company. So that's what we did.
- Q:** That was 1978?
- A:** Yeah, and we kept this New Jersey facility as the main office and opened offices in L.A. with a staff there as well.
- Q:** Who was in the L.A. office?
- A:** We started with a guy named Rick Sidoti who had come from promotion at 20th Century. He then returned to 20th and Joe Isgro ran our promotion there until Hosea Wilson joined us. Hosea also came from 20th Century where he had been working with Barry White. Then as we began to add more people, Dick Reus came in. Dick is now in charge of Pop promotion and Hosea is in R & B promotion and acts as Cecile's liaison person on the coast and pretty much runs the West Coast operation with Cecile's input. Then there's Tom Jones, who does sales and Al Edmondson who works with Hosea and there are also a variety of other people in sales around the country.
- Q:** You make this your primary office and studio here in New Jersey though.
- A:** Well yes, but everything is not necessarily recorded here. In the beginning we were using only this facility, but now if an artist is in L.A. we use a studio there. . . and I don't produce everything . . . we also buy masters.
- Q:** So you have had producers other than yourself do projects for Venture?
- A:** Yeah, we have had Isaac Hayes, for example, do a female artist named Genty. We also bought a master from Clarence Carter which is doing very well for us.
- Q:** What about distribution of the label?
- A:** At first what we did was to go the majors to see about the possibility of going through a major. . . but my partner is the kind of individual who likes to feel in control of his own destiny and has the financial wherewithall . . . so we decided that we preferred an independent situation.
- Q:** How many artists are there on the roster?
- A:** I would say that there are a total of about ten.
- Q:** Are you specializing primarily in R & B?
- A:** Not necessarily. We have a group called Pendulum, which is a white rock group doing very well for us. Our reasons for going R & B first were because we felt it was easier to get R & B airplay and to break through with that kind of product.
- Q:** Were you right?
- A:** I think so. It's really hard to get Pop airplay.
- Q:** Are you now doing anything different from before? I am asking because of the recent Pop success of both Pendulum and Jackie English. How long ago were they signed?
- A:** About six months . . . but they were not our first attempt at the Pop market. We also have a girl from Cleveland who I think is one of the best singers going. We had a record with her that we thought was a hit but we couldn't get radio play . . . I guess because there is so much product out there . . . so we've been trying but just not connected.
- Q:** What changed?
- A:** Well, in the Jackie English situation, a friend named Jay Warner called me to say that they had one song in the movie "Hopscotch", all the rest was Mozart, and if it was possible for me to do it quickly and guarantee them a release, then Jay could get K-Tel and Avco Embassy to help with the record. Cecile and I brought the girl in and did it over a weekend. Then we engaged the Scotti Brothers to also help us with the record . . . so we had a large promotional workforce and that's what broke it.
- Q:** It's interesting how a music publisher was directly involved in developing the record. What about Pendulum which broke shortly thereafter, did the Scotti Brothers also help in promotion on that?
- A:** Yes . . . on both of those records.
- Q:** Are you going to keep working with them in the area of promotion?
- A:** We are working out a situation with them on a continuing basis on selected records.
- Q:** To change the subject, Tony, what about music for commercials . . . are you still doing any of that?
- A:** I did a lot of that but I haven't been doing it anymore . . . it got so crazy running. . . but since we are only working on a limited number of artists for the label to try and make them happen, consequently I've found myself with some free time and I'm not the kind of person that can deal with that. So I started reaching out to do some other production work.
- Q:** So you are doing outside productions as well. Who are some of the artists?
- A:** Well I am presently working on Samantha Sang . . .
- Q:** Does she have a deal?
- A:** Actually we have a few offers, we just haven't decided on one yet. I'm also working with the Fifth Dimension. They're with a management and PR firm called Sterling-Winters who have got a lot going for the group with magazine and TV exposure. I'm also producing Freda Payne. She also has a regular Saturday TV series now which is doing very well.
- Q:** Does she have a record deal?
- A:** No, but she's with a guy named Charles Huggins at Hush Productions who is taking care of that.
- Q:** Back to the label . . . What are your immediate plans. Are you planning to sign more artists or to work more in the Pop area?
- A:** Actually, what's happening is that we really believe in the acts presently on the label and we're not looking to sign anything new until we can break them . . . unless of course, something special comes along that we feel very strongly about.

**Q:** Do you get a large number of tapes?

**A:** Are you kidding, I get piles of them.

**Q:** Do you listen to them yourself?

**A:** Yes, I try to get through them all. Sometimes it takes a while, but I try. We actually have a pretty good set up here as far as showing people respect who send us tapes. I feel that people who are good enough to send you material are like employees who work for nothing in a sense. So Carol keeps everything in a filing system as to what I like and so on.

**Q:** What about music publishing?

**A:** Well, when I first set up Venture Productions I also set up a publishing company called Etude Music with BMI. Then when we started Venture Records, we started Barcam, which is Barker-Camillo, and now everything that we do goes into Barcam.

**Q:** What about international licensing for both your publishing and record operation?

**A:** On the record product, it's on a piece to piece basis. In publishing we have a guy named Ralph Selzer who takes care of our international sub-publishing deals.

**Q:** So in effect, you take care of the creative end of the company and others do the business. That's a pretty good deal.

**A:** That's right . . . and Cecile is brilliant when it comes to business . . . so I think it makes for a nice combination.

**TONY CAMILLO:** Co-Owner



Tony Camillo is a writer, arranger, composer and musician's musician. A graduate of Julliard in trumpet and composition, he later received both his Masters and Doctorate from Columbia and studied conducting and composition with both Leonard Bernstein and Eric Leinsdorf. While active in music education, Tony also traveled extensively with his own orchestra in the late 50's and early 60's. Also during this time he wrote for a number of major publishing companies and began producing and arranging commercials as well. His radio and T.V. commercial credits include such major names as Burger King, Clairol, Gallo Wine, Schick, Fritos and Coca-Cola to name only a few.

In the mid 60's, Tony began to work with such name artists as Stevie Wonder, Freda Payne, The Supremes, Millie Jackson, Three Degrees and of course Gladys Knight and the Pips. He established Etude, his publishing company, and Venture Productions, his independent production company. For a while Tony worked out of Detroit with Holland-Dozier-Holland and the Motown organization. Then, in approximately 1971, Tony Camillo returned to New Jersey and built a private studio in his home which he has continued to modernize and develop.

Tony Camillo's hit singles include: "La Salsa" — Charo, "Dynomite" — Bazuka (#9 Billboard), Grammy winner "Midnight Train to Georgia" — Gladys Knight and the Pips, "I Feel A Song In My Heart" — Gladys Knight and the Pips, "Band of Gold" — Freda Payne (#1 Pop), "Bring the Boys Home" — Freda Payne (#1 Pop), "Want Ads" — Honeycones (#1 Pop), "One Monkey" — Honeycones (#1 Pop), "Give Me Just A Little More Time" — Chairman of the Board (#1 Pop), "She's Not Just Another Woman" — Eight Day (#1 R&B; Top 10 Pop), and "My Man, My Sweet Man" — Millie Jackson (#1 R&B, Top 10 Pop). His album credits also include such artists as Dionne Warwick, Cecil Holmes, Barry Miles, Ben Vereen and others.

**CECILE BARKER:** Co-Owner

Cecile was born in Brooklyn and grew up in the Baltimore area. With a masters in business and a doctorate in Physics, he married Francine who was the original Peaches of Peaches and Herb. To this day he still owns the name "Peaches and Herb" although he is no longer involved with their management. Back when he was managing the group he was also working for NASA. When his marriage and the management of Peaches and Herb ended Cecile continued to remain involved in the music industry and established Venture Records with Tony Camillo. Meanwhile Cecile also set up his own company in Washington DC, the O.A.O. Corporation, working in space research and defense. O.A.O. has been growing ever since and has proven to be enormously successful.

Today, Cecile is actively involved in both companies and commutes between Washington D.C., New Jersey, and Los Angeles and is constantly on the phone from Washington D.C. to Hosea in L.A. and Tony in New Jersey.

**ALISON OTTMAN:** Administrative Director for the label/Studio Manager

Alison joined Tony eight years ago as production co-coordinator for his projects. As the studio began working its management was added to her responsibilities. Then when the label was formed, she found herself co-coordinating the label as well. In effect, Alison is today involved in overseeing every area of Venture Records.

**CAROL LAWLER:** Publishing Administration

**HOSEA WILSON:**

Hosea came to Ventura Records from 20th Century Records where he worked with Russ Regan and was instrumental in breaking Barry White and Carol Douglas as well as other artists on that label. Hosea was also involved in promotions for such artists as Quincy Jones, Sylvia, Harold Melvin, Sister Sledge, Etta James, Chi-Lites, Foundations and numerous others.

**DICK REUS:** Director of Pop Promotion

Dick began his radio-music career in 1963 joining WDXY in Sumter, South Carolina as a DJ. He was promoted to Music and Program Director shortly thereafter and held that position until 1967. In '67 he purchased the "Southern Music Survey" from Paul Drew, changed the name to R3 (Reus Record Report), and went national with it. In 1967 Reus joined WLEE radio in Richmond, Virginia, as Music Director. Dick was promoted to Program Director in 1969 and held that position until 1974 while he continued to publish R3. In 1974 he sold R3 to Ron Brandon and joined Atlantic Records as local rep for the Carolinas, based out of Charlotte. Two years later Reus was promoted to Southeastern Regional Promotion Director out of Atlanta. Dick joined Venture Records as Southeast Regional Rep in 1978 still out of Atlanta. Then in 1979 he moved to L.A. as National Pop Promotion Director.

**AL EDMONDSON:** Assistant Director of R&B Promotion

**TOM JONES:** Marketing and Sales Director