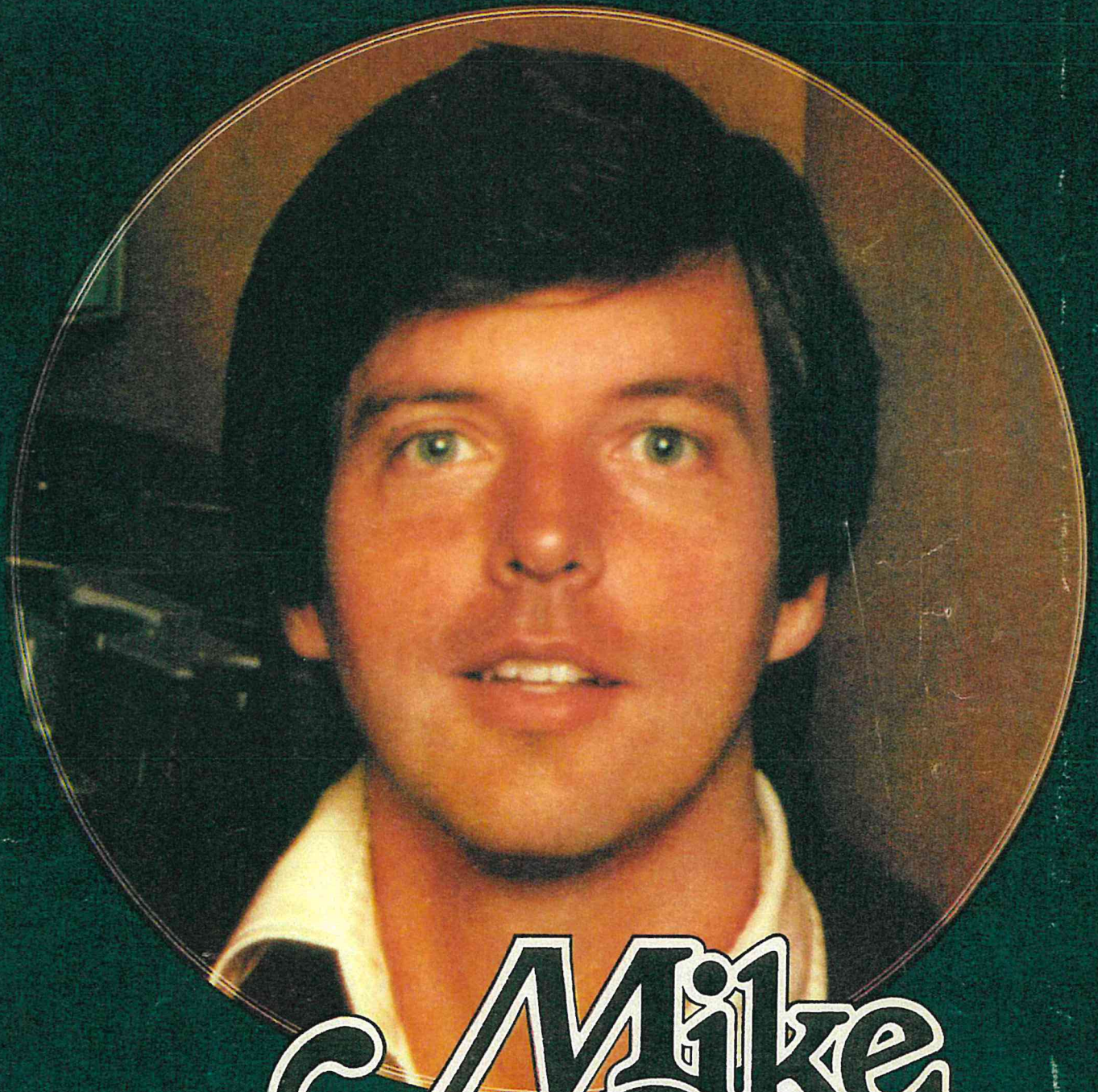


THE MANY WORLDS OF



Mike  
Curb



1976 was a big year for Warner-Curb Records. Among ALL record companies, Warner-Curb was Number 12, according to the Billboard year-end analysis.

---

## Labels

Pos. LABEL (No. of charted singles)

1. CAPITOL (43)
2. COLUMBIA (41)
3. A&M (28)
4. WARNER BROS. (26)
5. ARISTA (20)
6. ATLANTIC (27)
7. RCA (24)
8. UNITED ARTISTS (16)
9. MOTOWN (13)
10. REPRIZE (11)
11. ABC (25)

## 12. WARNER/CURB (8)

13. ROCKET (9)
  14. MERCURY (18)
  15. ASYLUM (13)
  16. PRIVATE STOCK (12)
  17. RSO (9)
  18. MCA (18)
  19. PHILADELPHIA INT'L. (9)
  20. MIDLAND INT'L. (5)
  21. TAMLA (8)
  22. ELEKTRA (9)
  23. CASABLANCA (6)
  24. BIG TREE (8)
  25. TK (4)
-



# CREATIVITY X BUSINESS SAVVY = MUSICAL CHEMISTRY

**I**n a world where specialists are rapidly becoming the norm and in an industry where they have virtually taken over, 32-year-old Mike Curb stands out as one of the few remaining talented and genuinely successful generalists.

Curb has done—and continues doing—everything from developing new rock acts and writing motion picture soundtracks to producing hit records and planning marketing and promotion campaigns. He has shunned specializing with one notable exception—the consumer. That's where Curb has become a specialist without peer. Throughout his musical career, which began inauspiciously a dozen years ago when he created a jingle for a Honda commercial, Curb has never lost touch with his audience—the con-

sumer—and what he (or she) wants and will buy in music. "Mike," explains Jerry Styner, one of Curb's producers and a long-time friend, "has an uncanny knack for picking a hit record. I know a lot of people say they can do that and many can, but Mike is the only person I know of who listens objectively to a record from the consumer's point of view as well as the musician's. And it is the consumer's viewpoint that is going to win out."

Curb produces with the market in mind. He's commercial and doesn't hide it. And, for that he has been criticized, suspected, ridiculed and oftentimes misunderstood. The unique combination of creativity and business acumen is something that one individual doesn't often show. Nearly a

(Continued on page MC-4)





dozen years ago, a young, struggling attorney who represented Curb described him as "the most brilliant personality I have ever met in the industry." Today, Dick Whitehouse, who still represents Curb and has in the past decade worked with a U.S. president on his election campaign and with various other business, political and entertainment personalities throughout the country, has modified his appraisal of Curb: "He's undoubtedly one of the most brilliant men I've met in any industry."

It was Curb who took a barbershop quartet-type group from the Andy Williams Show and turned them into one of the biggest selling groups of the decade—the Osmonds.

It was Curb who decided not to record Marie Osmond with a pop song but in a country vein instead. The result: "Paper Roses," both a country and pop hit and the beginning of a career for another Osmond.

And it was Curb who decided to combine Marie and Donny as a singing duo which provided the springboard for their network television show.

Mike could well be equated with a master chemist. He has the ability to recognize what he can and cannot do. Because of that awareness, virtually every one of his business and production agreements is individually structured to the situation.

"It's Mike," explains Dick, "who comes to me with the idea for the deal and all I do is put it down. Sometimes, I think, people have given me too much credit but it is really Curb who has these unique concepts on how things can be brought together." An example of the various ways in which production agreements can be put together are the Osmonds and the Four Seasons. Each has its own unique elements.

In the Osmond arrangement he constructed, Mike's involvement begins with the concept of the album (or single) and the selection of the material. He helps select the musicians, arranger and sits behind the board on the date. In effect, he is the producer.

In the case of the Four Seasons, they are actually signed to Mike Curb Productions but have their own producer, Bob Gaudio. Their product is then turned over to Warner Brothers for release on the Warner/Curb label.

Everything, however, comes together when it comes time to pick the singles and implement the marketing and promotion plans. "Every act that works with Mike," says Dick, "realizes the feel and ability he has in picking singles for the market. They also know, as well as the labels that distribute the product, his promotion and marketing ability. In each case his thoughts are instrumental in decisions. Mike knows exactly what his cup of tea is. He knows where he should be involved and to what extent."

Mike's involvement helped lead to a phenomenal year for both acts. The Four Seasons Warner/Curb single "December 1963" not only sold 5 million units but was also Warner's biggest-selling single of 1976. Donny and Marie's tv show LP went Gold as well with some significant help and airplay from the "Deep Purple" single hit it contained.

What Mike does is to carefully evaluate each situation and act. In most cases he's more of an "executive producer" than a producer. "He knows, for example," says Whitehouse, "that Ken Mansfield, Tompall Glaser's producer, is probably the finest contemporary country producer in the industry. Mike would never attempt to get involved in the production but he would try and get Tompall and Ken together. That's exactly the role he played."

He has, of course, played a much stronger role in other situations. The Osmonds are a good example of this approach. Sitting in his living room and reflecting on his achievements, Mike considers his selection of three Osmond tunes in particular ("Go Away Little Girl," "Puppy Love" and "Too Young") as keys in the making of the group. Mike's discussion of the tunes is the closest he comes to "taking credit" for anything. For the most part, Curb chooses to give the credit to those around him. Seldom does he use the word "I."

"Mike isn't concerned about 'getting credit'—his

(Continued on page MC-8)

# Billboard®

This special TRIBUTE TO MIKE CURB appeared in the March 5, 1977 issue of *Billboard Magazine*. *Billboard*, the prestigious national trade magazine of the music industry, periodically salutes those individuals whose contributions to the recording industry merit distinctive recognition.



Mike Douglas, left, and Tony Bennett, enjoy a laugh with Mike during a break in taping of the Douglas Show. "Mike put us into the singles business in 1976," says Mo Ostin, Warner's Chairman of the Board. And, indeed, Warner/Curb was a potent singles force placing No. 12 amongst all labels in '76 single activity.



Mike chaired, along with State Attorney General Evelle Younger, President Ford's California campaign—a State which the former President won.



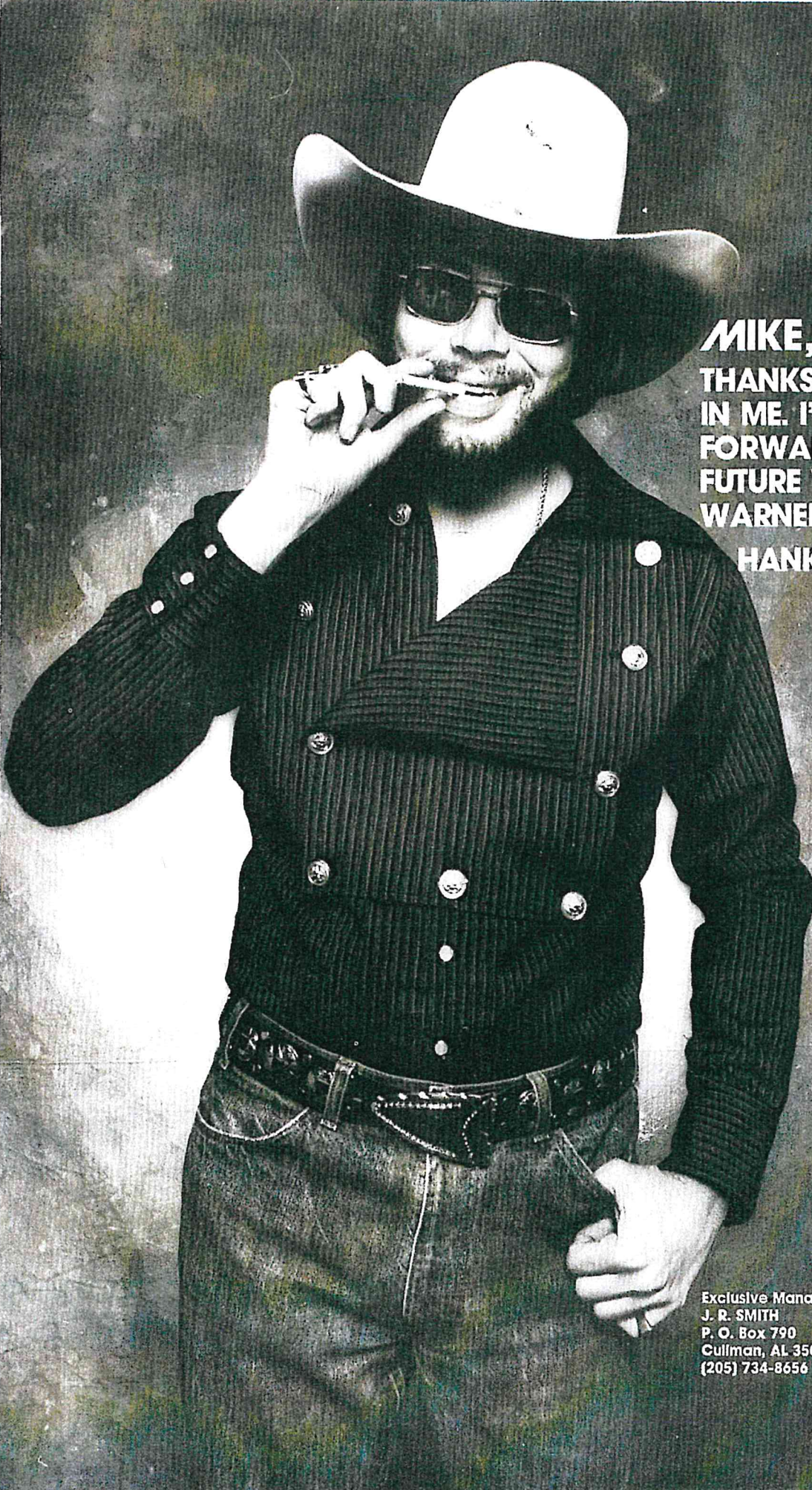
Mike  
Curb



"Congratulations, Mike.  
We wish you  
many more years  
of great success."  
—Berry Gordy







**MIKE,  
THANKS FOR BELIEVING  
IN ME. I'M LOOKING  
FORWARD TO A GREAT  
FUTURE WITH  
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*Mike,*

*It's been great working with you. Thanks  
for ten great years and thirty million records.*

*Michael Lloyd*



# Musical Chemistry

Continued from page MC-4

interest is strictly in seeing the thing go," says Casey Kasem, another long-time Curb friend and well-known commercial announcer. Casey, who hosts one of the most extensively syndicated rock radio shows in the world (American Top 40), was once a local Los Angeles disk jockey who spent most of his time running between the station and a television studio where he hosted a six-day-a-week dance show. During the course of his "travels," he became manager of a rock act.

"One day while at the station I got a call from a guy who said his name was Mike Curb and he wanted to produce my act. I had no idea of who—or what—Mike Curb was. In fact, he sounded so young on the telephone I thought he was a kid putting me on."

It was, however, no put-on. It was 19-year-old Mike who had seen and talked to Casey's act and was enthusiastic about it. "He was more excited about the act than I was. When I met and talked with him it was impossible to say no. He was, and still is, that kind of guy. He just bubbles with positive thoughts and there is no such thing as 'no' to Mike."

What impressed Casey the most about Curb was his honesty. And, he says, it is probably the thing that bound their friendship forever. "Mike cut the act but I didn't like what I heard. He re-cut it and it still wasn't right. What amazed me was that he insisted on paying for every session. He wouldn't take a dime. He was the first guy I ever met in this business who felt he was responsible and should pick up the check."

Like many who deal with Mike on a regular basis, Casey expresses amazement at Curb's mental capacity for handling both creative and business duties. "He's got a brain like a computer," Casey says. "If he meets someone it's as if he flashes on that person's one particular ability, puts it in his memory and then calls it up when the time is right."

In Kasem's case, Curb's computer-like memory opened up an entire new career. It was Curb who woke Casey up late one night and told him that he had to "drop by accidentally" the next day during a visit a commercial agent was making to Curb's office. Casey remembers shrugging it off, hanging up the telephone and going back to bed. The next morning, first thing, the telephone rang again. It was Curb reminding Casey to drop by when the agent was in Curb's office. Reluctantly, Casey agreed and met Charles Stern, the agent who has turned Casey's voice into the most-heard commodity on national television. Today, Casey is one of the two or three busiest voice-over announcers in the business.

"Mike," Casey says smiling, "makes you feel like you're standing still. When I first met him I was doing six tv and radio shows a week plus a lot of local dances but he still made me feel like I was idle. He's a rare individual who is capable of han-

dling dozens of projects at the same time and yet his mind never becomes befuddled."

If there is a weakness in the Curb makeup, it is with details. But, virtually from the day he opened his Sidewalk offices his sister Carole has been there to handle the details and follow through. Carole handles the people and Mike makes the decisions. Those around him agree that Carole—along with Dick Whitehouse—are two of the Curb organization's most valuable assets. Both understand that Mike does not have time for details; that portion of the job is up to them.

The nucleus of the Curb family has grown somewhat, though. In 1973, Carole married Tony Scotti. Three years before, Tony and his brother, Ben, formed their own promotion company, and it has done a considerable amount of work for Warner/Curb. Curb credits Tony and Ben's firm as the company that was instrumental in breaking the Four Seasons "December 1963" as well as other label product. Mike is particularly proud of their accomplishments and what they've done for his burgeoning young label. Not to mention the fact Tony is his brother-in-law which gives him an added—but unspoken—source of pride.

There are many Mike Curb accomplishments that are especially worthy of note. There are of course, the Osmond streak begin when he was president of MGM Records but so did his involvement with Isaac Hayes ("Shaft"), Sammy Davis Jr. ("Candy Man"), Eric Burdon and War ("Spill the Wine"), Lou Rawls ("Natural Man") and Curb's own Mike Curb Congregation's "Burning Bridges." In 1972, Curb's single productivity and success was so great that it earned him a Billboard award as "top producer of the year."

But MGM wasn't all pie a la mode. The young (he was 25 at the time) chief executive had his detractors and they came out of the woodwork during a brief, stormy period that took place during the height of the drug culture era. Mike had been in the industry for more than five years prior to becoming MGM's president and he had seen the growing drug influence and the disastrous effect it was having not only on the artists but on the labels, relationships with artists and the waste of money and resources that resulted.

As MGM's president, he condemned the use of drugs in a trade interview and the story made headlines throughout the country. Reaction outside the industry was, of course, favorable but inside where interests often dictated how a person stood, he became a controversial figure. The criticism he took in relationship to the remarks he made was entirely out of proportion. It has made him leery of interviews and cautious in what he says. "I learned a great deal from that incident and I'm glad I learned it at an early age," he says.

Mike never responded to the remarks but others have. "Anybody who becomes a millionaire while he's still a teenager, as was the case with Mike," says Kasem, "is going to be

misunderstood by people. Maybe it's jealousy. I don't know. But, at times, people look at things they normally wouldn't even bother with. I think it was one of those times."

There is virtually unanimous agreement among those who work with Mike and those who are in the industry and are familiar with the name, that Curb never criticizes anyone he deals with nor anyone in the industry, even if he feels they are wrong. "Mike's never one to be negative about anyone," continues Kasem. "The greatest lesson I've learned from him is how to take a bad situation and make it into a winning one. Spending time cutting down others isn't Mike. Rather than argue a point after the act has already been done, Mike would prefer to take the loss himself and forget it."

Curb is sensitive and cognizant of others. He may be in the midst of a meeting with someone: the telephone rings, the door opens, another person comes in, the telephone rings again—there may be two dozen other things going on during the meeting yet he never loses the concentration on the subject he is discussing with you. As well known as his lateness is, there is another aspect of Mike's personality that is known, too—his unhesitant, sincere apology if he is late. In helping to gather the data for this special section, Mike spent close to two hours alone just scrutinizing his past, and present, so as not to forget the name of one person with whom he has dealt.

The people he associates with number in the hundreds in the course of a week. But, there is a Mike Curb "inner circle" and most of these work for Curb's production company or have been close friends since he entered the business. Oddly, in a business that is notorious for its high turnover, those who have been with Mike have been with him a long time—eight, nine, 10 years or more. They know his day begins by 7 a.m. and seldom ends before midnight. Much of the telephone work is done from his home in Trousdale Estates, an area in West Los Angeles. Mike has a direct line to his office and, if needed, he's available at any time, seven days a week.

In the rambling home he occupies which overlooks Beverly Hills and Los Angeles, Curb has little time for sightseeing or relaxation. He has not gone into extensive decoration or remodeling. What decorating there is came about largely through his sister, Carole. To Mike, his home, or wherever he is, is his office. He carries a daily calendar in his head and a "reminder" in the person of Nola Leone, his executive assistant, who has been with him since the MGM days.

"Mike's biggest problem in getting to an appointment is that he doesn't want to be rude to the person he's with so consequently he has a hard time leaving. He's always willing to listen to what the person has to say—no matter what time it is."

Styner, who has worked with Mike for a dozen years, looks at it this way: "He keeps such a busy schedule that it is hard to

(Continued on page MC-10)

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## Mike. Thanks for recording our HITS...

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"Love Me For A Reason"  
"I Can't Get Next To You"  
"Never Can Say Goodbye"

### Donny Osmond

"A Million To One"  
"C'mon Marianne"

### Donny & Marie

"Ain't Nothin' Like  
The Real Thing"  
"It Takes Two"

### Four Seasons

"December 1963"  
"Who Loves You"  
"Silver Star"

## ...and keeping us No. 1.

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*Wayne Newton*





# Musical Chemistry

Continued from page MC-8

get together with him and when you are together it seems like he's doing 14 other things at the same time. Some people may find that frustrating but when you are saying something he's listening—and nobody listens better than Mike."

Curb's lifestyle has never varied. He's always crowded 25 hours into a 24-hour day. Born in Savannah, he was the son of an FBI agent who moved four times before Mike started grammar school in Compton, California. He graduated from Grant High School in the San Fernando Valley and then attended college where he majored in psychology. Actually, college was more of an avocation than anything. While attending classes Mike worked as a box boy during the day at a nearby White Front discount store and at night he played piano and guitar ("mainly by ear") in his band. At White Front he also got his first taste of the "record industry"—when he worked in the record department. In the meantime, he also booked his band which was kept busy playing for local fraternity parties and dances.

Mike's schooling came to an abrupt end when he wrote a tune called "You Meet the Nicest People On A Honda." He took the tune to the advertising agency that was handling Honda and they bought it. Mike is quick to recognize and remember the encouragement and help he got during those days. "There were three girls in my band and I tried to get someone in the record industry to put up the money and let me produce them. Eddie Ray, who was an executive at Imperial, listened, put up the money and provided me with the encouragement I needed." The record was far from a hit but it gave Mike the confidence to write "Honda" and sell it to the agency. He was 18 at the time but the memories are vivid. His admiration for Ray is strong and today, although Ray is based in Memphis, the two have a number of common business interests.

Things began happening fast for young Curb after that. He went to work for a production company (Nick Venet and Fred Benson) that specialized in turning out hot rod LPs which were cheap to produce and showed good returns for labels in the early '60s.

Mike worked on anything and everything. His first big break came in the form of a soundtrack he composed for a film, "Skater Dater," which was put together by a group of college students. The film, which depicted the story of a group of kids and their skateboards, won a Cannes Film Festival Award, and an Academy Award nomination. But, more than that, it showed that Mike had the talent and ability to score motion pictures. He formed Sidewalk Productions shortly thereafter and one of the first records he produced, "Apache," an instrumental by The Arrows, became a hit. The Arrows then be-

came the instrumental stars of "Wild Angels," an enormously successful motorcycle picture (and soundtrack) which Sidewalk produced and Tower Records, a Capitol Records subsidiary at the time, distributed.

Curb built Sidewalk into one of the most profitable production companies in the industry. It was the late '60s, the era of the conglomerates. Transcontinental, a major owner of racks throughout the country, was looking for a label and production company. Sidewalk was it. In 1968, Transcon purchased 80% of it from Curb. "For various reasons it never quite got off the ground," Mike recalls.

In the midst of the Transcon relationship, Curb negotiated one of the least known but perhaps one of the most significant contracts in the history of the industry. Just prior to the Transcon purchase, Mike had become a part owner in a separate production company. Mike and his producer friend negotiated a contract with a then, relatively unknown act. He sold the act to Columbia for a substantial price and enabled his producer friend to continue its production. The producer was Jim Guercio; the act, Chicago; the production company, Poseidon, the forerunner of Guercio's current Caribou Productions.

In 1969, Curb was contacted by Jim Aubrey and became president of MGM Records with headquarters in New York. "The company had been acquired by Kirk Kerkorian and the label was a mess," Curb recalls. "Its losses were more than \$15 million for a two-year period."

At 25 years of age, Mike took over the beleaguered label and turned it around. He cut costs, moved offices to L.A. and began turning out hits. His MGM successes were numerous but, perhaps, the one he recalls most fondly—aside, of course, from the Osmond breakthrough—was Sammy Davis' "Candy Man." It was the first number 1 record the singer ever had.

In 1974, the label was sold to Polygram. Six months later, Mike sold his 20% interest in MGM to Polygram as well. Thus, for the first time since he formed Sidewalk, he was on his own again. He formed Mike Curb Productions and by early 1975 he was back on the charts.

Since forming Mike Curb Productions, he has kept a relatively low profile. Little is heard or read about him. Even one of his most recent (1975) successful joint ventures, the "Hitville" country label he set up for Motown, is not common knowledge. There have been other significant events as well—his continued success with the Osmonds; the rise of the Warner/Curb label; his motion picture, publishing and country activities. With all the activity, why the low profile?

"We've spent all our time trying to build a sound, broad-based production company. All of our efforts have been directed towards the artist and I think keeping a low profile has enabled us to concentrate on our people instead of ourselves," Mike explains. Yet, there may be other reasons, too. At 32, Mike certainly isn't old but neither is he the fuzzy-

creased 25 year old who has been in the industry for 10 years.

"I think," Dick Whitehouse says, "he's become tougher. By that I don't refer to 'meanness' but more in an experience sense. He's seen a lot, but he's just as people-oriented as ever."

"I don't think he's as shy as he once was, that is, if you can call Mike shy," says Kasem. "What I mean is that as an 18-year-old making business deals with people in their 40s and 50s and beyond, you act differently than a person who is in his 30s making the same kind of deals. He's also established a successful track record. People no longer wonder who this guy is when they meet him."

Mike has grown as a person and so have his interests. Last year, for instance, he spent a good deal of time as chairman of the California delegation to the Republican National Convention. He backed Ronald Reagan and, needless to say, Reagan won the California primary. Although Reagan lost the nomination, Curb's political activity attracted the attention of the then president, Gerald Ford. Mike was asked to co-chair, along with California Attorney General Evelle Younger, Ford's statewide campaign. He did and Ford won the state.

"It was an experience that was particularly healthy for me," he recalls. "I learned and saw a great deal and I think every businessman, at one time or another, should get involved in politics."

Mike's political involvement, however, is far from an end. Newly-elected U.S. Senator from California, S. I. Hayakawa, asked him to be chairman of his inaugural committee and recently he was elected as the Republican Party's National Committeeman from California. He is the youngest Committeeman in the Party's history.

Curb's spare time is not just taken up with politics and election campaigns. In the past few years he's developed a keen sense of obligation to his community. Many executives espouse the same philosophy as Mike—"we've got to do something about the kids growing up; we've got to help educate them about our system and how it works." Yet few, if any, ever do anything about it. Curb has and is. For the past few years he's been active in Junior Achievement, an organization which concentrates on educating youngsters in the benefits of the private enterprise system.

This year, Mike was chairman of the organization's 22nd annual "Future Unlimited Banquet." Aside from serving in that capacity, Mike had several other things to be particularly proud of. Despite his hectic 18 to 24-hour work day, he managed to put aside time this year to visit nearly two dozen Southern California high schools and talk to kids about the system that has enabled him to become so successful.

"Students, of course," he says, "don't relate to things like inflation and economic spirals. You're wasting your time when

(Continued on page MC-28)

# Congratulations, Mike!

## Al Martino



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Great Talent*

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WARNER/CURB

# Nº12 WITH A STAR

Unquestionably, one of the key ingredients in the past success of Mike Curb has been the Osmonds. His name has become synonymous with the group. But there is another ingredient that looms just over the horizon; one that could have as great—and possibly greater—potential than the Osmonds: the Warner/Curb label.

As with most of his projects, Curb has maintained a low profile with the label. There are no weekly trade stories or hyperbole about insignificant events. It is being built in the Curb tradition: quietly and without fanfare. Yet in the two years since it was formed jointly with Warners, the Warner/Curb label has had several significant accomplishments.

Five of its 10 artists have already had chart records. One of the artists, whom Curb views as another burgeoning superstar, is Shaun Cassidy, the younger brother of David, who has had two top 10 records in Germany and has become the hottest artist in that country. His U.S. release will get an additional boost from national television (every other Sunday evening on ABC) where he plays one of the starring roles in the "Hardy Boys" series.

In 1976, Warner/Curb finished twelfth among all labels in charted singles. One of those was the Four Seasons' "December 1963" which was not only Warner's biggest-selling single of the year but turned out to be the company's first entry to ever hit the top of the British charts.

Understandably, Curb is excited about the label's

potential. In talking about his various enterprises Mike shows equal enthusiasm for every artist and project. However, in discussing Warner/Curb and the high hopes he has for it, there seems to be an extra glint in his eyes. His aim is to build Warner/Curb into a broad-based, successful label, the kind of label that is not noted for any one kind of music but for its ability to have a hit with any music or recording style.

Curb doesn't pretend to be able to produce such diverse Warner/Curb acts as the Hues Corporation, Hank Williams Jr., the Four Seasons, Jim Stafford or the Bellamy Brothers himself. But he does know how to get the right people together and make it happen. "A label doesn't have to specialize in order



Mike and long-time attorney and friend, Dick Whitehouse, discuss a proposed agreement at an early morning meeting at Mike's house. Dick, who has worked with Mike for more than a dozen years, says that "nothing he does or comes up with ever surprises me anymore."

to be successful. All you have to do is bring the right ingredients together. That's how we're operating at Warner/Curb," he explains.

It was also the way he operated at MGM. While he

(Continued on page MC-14)



Mike  
Curb



## THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MIKE CURB CONGREGATION



Next year will be our biggest year yet, and we've been especially proud of our albums featuring "Put Your Hand In The Hand," "Softly Whispering I Love You," "Burning Bridges," "The Mike Curb Congregation Sing Hits From The Glen Campbell Show," "It's A Small World," and our new spiritual album for Word Records, "I Saw The Light."

Dearest Mike,

"...It was a party  
just to be  
near you..."

**Liza Minnelli**

Mike Curb is one of  
the finest young  
executives I've met  
along the way.

Besides that,  
he is talented.

**EDDY ARNOLD**

Mike, I'll never forget  
you signed me to my  
first meaningful record  
contract. Thanks for  
believing.

**Mel Tillis**

1976 "Country Music  
Entertainer of the Year"





The most abundant "musical instrument" in the Curb household—the telephone. Virtually, every room in his home has one.

*"He's the classic textbook record executive."*

ran it, the label had an astounding success in a variety of areas—from the Osmonds and Eric Burden and War to Neil Sedaka and the Sylvers. At Warner/Curb, as he did with MGM, he often functions as an "executive producer," overseeing and helping put things together. He looks to the Hues Corporation as becoming "a major act of the '70s. I think we have the right ingredients with Wally Holmes as producer and the material that has been selected. When they were with RCA the group had several hits but they felt their audience wasn't broad-based enough. The things they are doing on our label will give them that expanded base."

The success of Warner/Curb, however, is not just a matter of turning over the finished product to Warners and hoping it gets played. Curb has been around long enough and knows that marketing and promotion are equally as important as the product. "He's the classic textbook record executive," maintains Dick Whitehouse, Mike's business and legal alter ego for the past 13 years. "He understands what the concept of promotion is and exactly what problems the promo man has in the market. He's aware and realistic about airplay. Because the record is super doesn't mean it will get played."

Whereas many record executives bemoan the fact they have a "great record" and the stations "just don't recognize it," Curb does something about it. As part of Mike Curb Productions and the Warner/Curb label, he has promo men on staff who work with Warners in obtaining airplay. He's also aware of the highly subtle ways in which stations may discriminate against product—"we've already got one that's being played that sounds the same as this one"; "we're already programming a record by your artist"; "we're already programming too many from your label."

Although those objections to getting airplay are rarely ever stated, good marketing executives in the industry are aware of them and plan accordingly. Curb does exactly that. His releases are not just dumped on the market when they come out of the studio. He surveys the competition, evaluates his chances of airplay, plans his approach and then releases the product. He coordinates all his efforts with the Warner staff so there is no duplication or waste. "On several occasions," Whitehouse recalls, "I've sat in on marketing meetings with Mike and representatives from a label and they are simply astounded at the knowledge he has of the problems the field force must face. He doesn't attempt to 'shove' his theories down anybody's throat, either. Mike always listens and evaluates and tosses in his own ideas for criticism as well. Usually, he'll then go along with the consensus."

One area where Curb seldom follows the con-

(Continued on page MC-32)



Curb has become an expert on multi-national marketing of disks. His comments often provoking exchanges at various industry meetings he discusses European markets with a MIDEM. A key artist for Warner/Curb during the 1970s was Shaun Cassidy, the subject of discussion Mike and Nola Leone. Nola, who works on projects for Curb's production company, was mental in the extensive teen magazine for the Osmonds—and Donny—while at similar approach is planned for Cassidy. Seasons have become one of the biggest in the country and one of the foundations of the Warner/Curb label.

*Mike Curb*

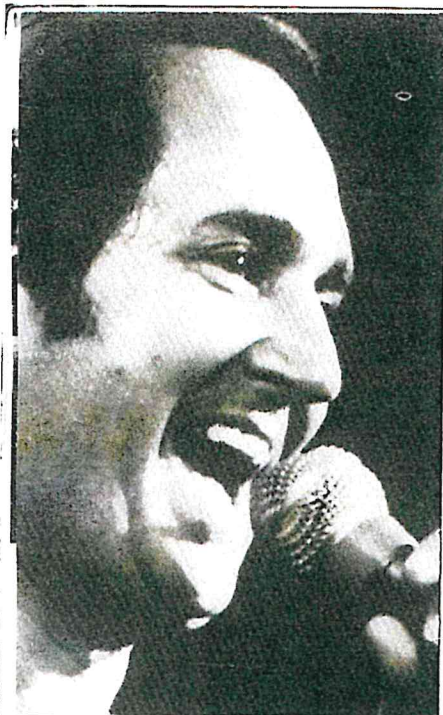


*Thanks, Mike,  
for all  
the hits.*

*The  
OSMONDS*

  
KOLOB  
PRODUCTIONS





Neil Sedaka (left) was one of the "plums" Mike signed while at MGM. "They're going to be one of the major acts of 1977," says Curb of the Hues Corpora (clockwise) who joined him at Warner/Curb. Mike views Shaun Cassidy as a coming superstar. His first U.S. release is on Warner/Curb. Jim Stafford's "Snakes" helped turn things into "dollars and cents" for Mike and MGM. "Junk Food Junkie" was an unlikely title for any song, but it turned into a major hit for Warner/Curb and Larry Groce. It's been one hit after another for Bellamy Brothers since they joined Curb and his label. Below, administrative duties have cut a great amount of time Mike has for composing, but admittedly, he would like to get back to the piano one of these days.

*"He's the only person I know of  
who listens to a record objectively  
from a consumers  
point of view  
as well as  
a musicians"*



*Mike  
Curb*



# **JUNE, 1975**

## **(Oh, What a Night)**

...A very special time for Mike Curb and Warner Bros. They'd just concluded the paperwork creating Warner-Curb Records, a special cooperative venture between an independent with vision and a major with muscle.

Less than two years later, both parties can look back proudly on plenty of dollars well-earned and plenty of efforts well spent. Like the work that went into sales of some 5 million singles. Like the **Four Seasons** phenomenon (two Gold singles; Warners' biggest 45 of '76 in "Dec. 1963"). Like the runaway international success of the **Bellamy Bros.** and the assembling of a premier artist roster.

As good as the recent past has been to us all, we're supremely confident *the best is yet to come.*



Warner-Curb Records





# Osmond mastermind

**I**t was 1965 and the producer was pointing to the picture on the wall behind his desk of a group of clean-cut, short-haired youngsters and telling his visitor that "this is the most talented group of performers in America and they're going to be the biggest act in the country one day."

The visitor studied the photo and was struck by the resemblance of those in it to a group you might find in an early 20th Century family album. The group was young and so was the producer. In fact, one had to study the photo closely before realizing that the producer did have a few years on the oldest member in the group.

Between the producer and the unlikely, anethetically pure appearance of the musical act in the photograph, the producer's statement could qualify as a put-on. Anyone would have a hard time believing that one day the act would become one of the biggest-selling groups in the industry and the young producer would be the man responsible for that success. After all, this was the mid-'60s and Hollywood. The Beatles and English rock acts dominated the charts and hair was getting longer by the minute.

Yet, 19-year-old Mike Curb, who had just formed Sidewalk Productions, wasn't dwelling on foreign invasions; he was thinking of the group in the photograph behind the desk—the Osmonds.

The Osmond success and the man behind them is virtually taken for granted. But, with the Osmonds, Mike demonstrated every aspect of the creative and business genius that has made him unique in the industry. His unwavering faith and keen judgment gave them their initial hits and then new recording life and longevity when it appeared Donny's voice-change was going to make things difficult. It was Curb, too, who surprised everyone not only with the

decision to record Marie Osmond but with the type of material he selected and the reason for it.

Every step in the Osmonds' recording career was planned. Certainly, there had to be luck involved—there is in every success—but luck doesn't account for success; planning and quality do.

Curb's faith and the closeness of the producer and the group is reflected in Olive Osmond's—the group's mother—thoughts about Mike.

"The ideas were always Mike's. He believed in them, inspired them and creatively criticized them when they needed it. He's become more than just a producer to us; he's a wonderful friend as well."

The closeness between the group and Mike did not just develop through joint recording ventures. Much of it comes from a common outlook: the Osmonds are Mormons who believe in the sanctity of the home and family. They have high moral standards and the sniffing of cocaine and the smoking of grass that is prevalent in the entertainment industry is alien to them. Although he is not a Mormon, Curb has similar feelings and shares a common outlook about the kind of lifestyle people should have. Thus the two had a common base to start with and through the years it has developed into a sound foundation.

Mike based his approach to the Osmonds' recording career on three concepts:

- (1) The industry was ready for a family-type, or "G" rated, act.
- (2) There had never before been a successful act in which the lead singer was a 13-year-old singing for other 13-year-olds. Certainly, David Cassidy had achieved success with the same au-

*(Continued on page MC-27)*



The Osmonds, through Curb's innovations are now five different recording acts—(1) Donny, (2) Donny and Marie, (3) Jimmy, (4) Marie and (5) the Osmonds (group).

*Mike  
Curb*



Billboard couldn't  
honor a more  
"NATURAL MAN."

Thanks for my  
Grammy Award  
for that record.

**Lou Rawls**

Thank you  
for making  
"Shaft" possible.

**Isaac Hayes**

Thank you for my  
recording  
"The Way We Were"

**Andy Williams**

Thank you, Mike Curb,  
for the spirit, the en-  
thusiasm, and the leader-  
ship with which you in-  
spired the MGM Records  
Division.

**Frank Rosenfelt**  
President, MGM, Inc.

"American Bandstand"  
is a legend in the music  
business—and so are  
you, Mike. Thanks for  
writing the  
"BANDSTAND"  
*theme song.*

*Dick Clark*

Congratulations on  
a well-deserved tribute.

With much affection,

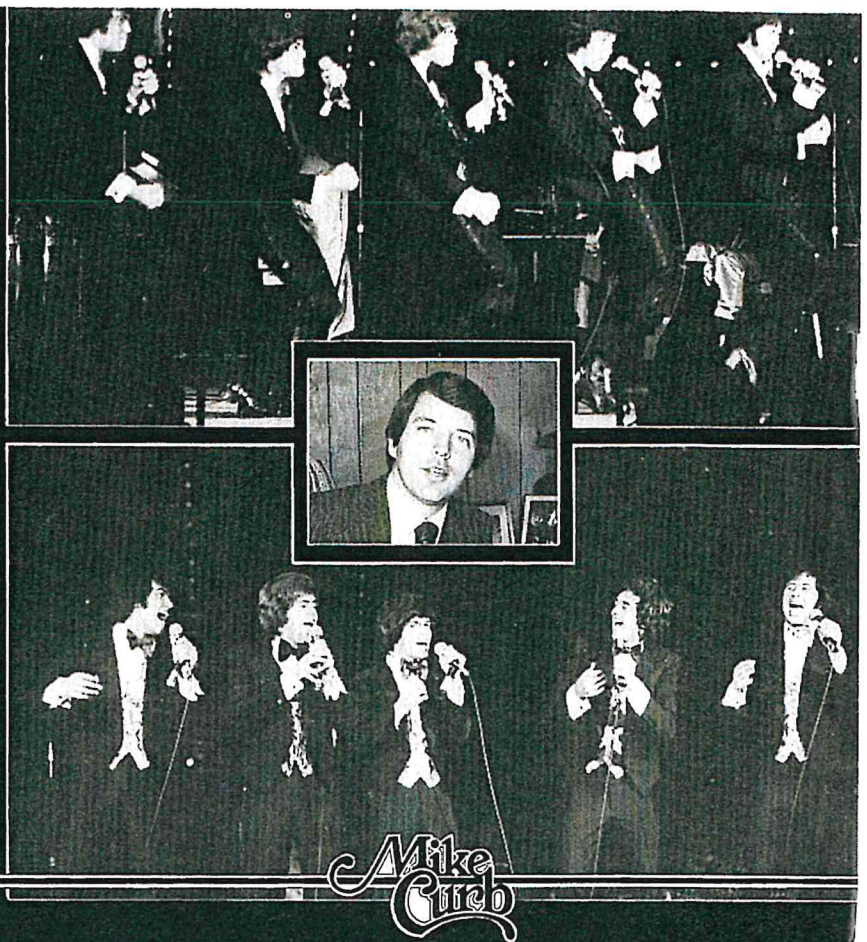
Steve & Eydie



*"All the ideas  
and directions  
for the Osmonds  
were Mike's"*

*—Olive Osmond*

The Osmonds' television career began more than a decade ago on the Andy Williams' Show and now they appear as regular guests on brother Donny's and sister Marie's network effort. "The most talented group in America" is the way Mike described the Osmonds when he first met them in the mid-60s.



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**The Hues Corporation**

and

**Producer**

*Wally Holmes*

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MIKE!**





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and more coming!**

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**THANKS MIKE FOR YOUR  
CONTRIBUTION TO MY SUCCESS**

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**JIM STAFFORD**



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and family"**

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best—to the very best.

**Jerry Styner**

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and Talented  
Human Being.*

*Al Kasha  
&  
Joel Hirschhorn*

## TO MIKE CURB OUR WORLDWIDE BEST WISHES

**WORLD  
WIDE**



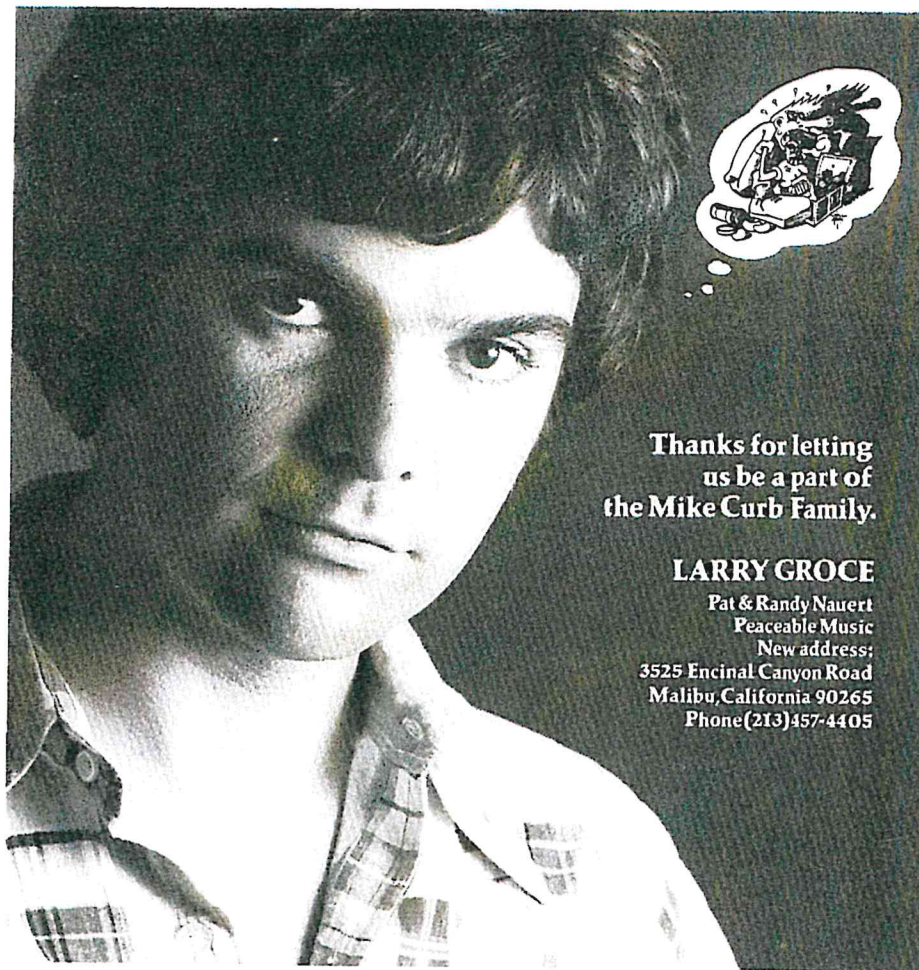
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*Shaun Cassidy*



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Friendship.**

**My Best,  
Sonny James**



# MASTER BLENDER OF R&B AND COUNTRY

*"You can be good  
at both and you  
don't have to  
sacrifice one  
for the  
other"*

Curb guided MGM's fortunes  
during the early 70s.

"All For The Love Of Sun-  
shine" was one of Hank Wil-  
liams' biggest hits for Mike while  
Curb headed MGM.

Theoretically, no two musical forms are farther apart than the sound of coun-  
try and the soul of r&b, yet Mike Curb has managed to not only bridge the gap  
between the two but register phenomenal success in each as well.

Curb does not pretend to be an expert in either, but he is a master  
blender and his country and r&b accomplishments are measures of  
his feel and ability to find and combine the right ingredients for  
the production. Lou Rawls' "Natural Man" and Hank Williams  
Jr.'s "All For The Love Of Sunshine" are prime examples  
of the Curb expertise. Both were produced and became  
hits under Mike's guidance when he was president  
of MGM Records.

Lou Rawls had one of  
his biggest successes  
with Curb at MGM with his  
Grammy Award winning "Nat-  
ural Man."

Mike and Mel Tillis have joined  
forces on numerous occasions  
for successful country  
recordings.

Although the success he had with country  
while with MGM is fairly common knowl-  
edge, few realize the equally significant  
accomplishments he had with r&b.

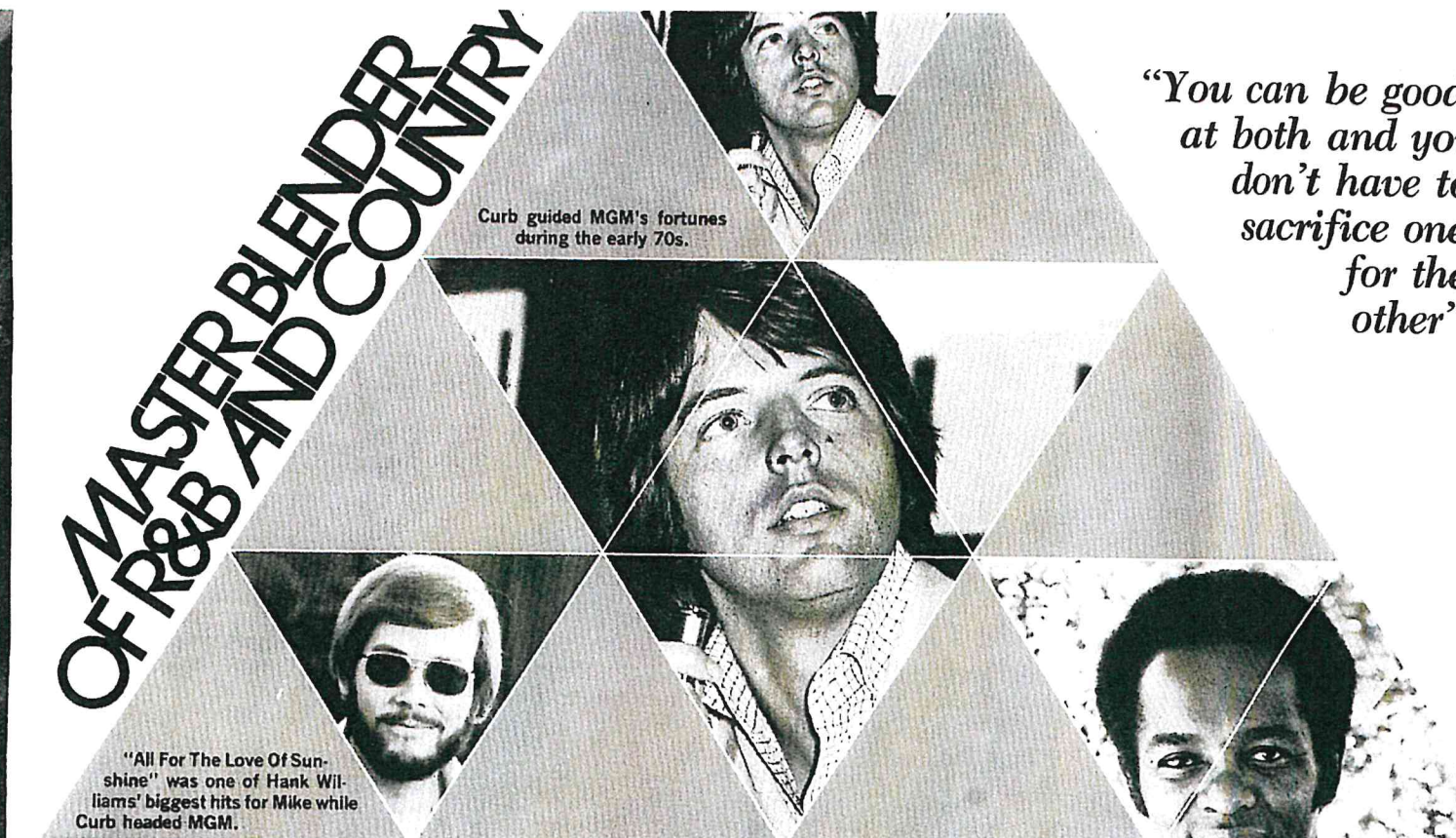
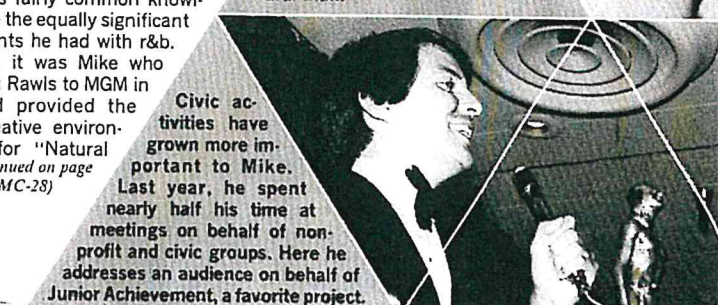
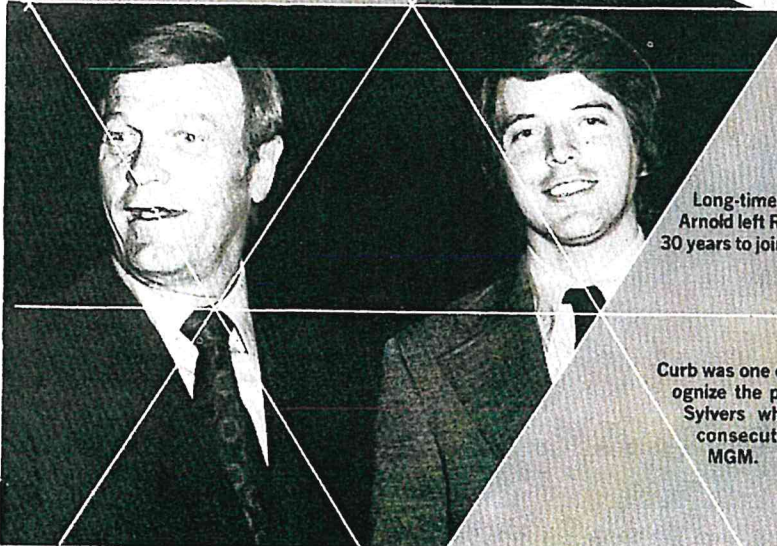
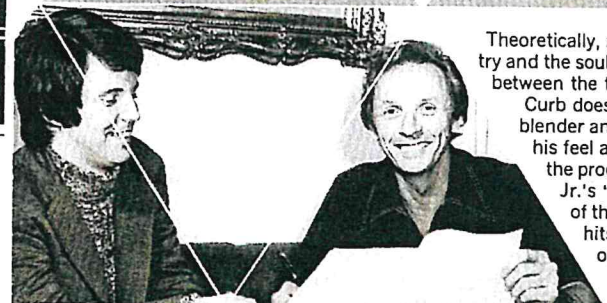
For example, it was Mike who  
brought Lou Rawls to MGM in  
1972 and provided the  
right creative environ-  
ment for "Natural  
(Continued on page  
MC-28)

Civic ac-  
tivities have  
grown more im-  
portant to Mike.  
Last year, he spent  
nearly half his time at  
meetings on behalf of non-  
profit and civic groups. Here he  
addresses an audience on behalf of  
Junior Achievement, a favorite project.

Richie Havens was another  
MGM winner.

Long-time friend Eddie  
Arnold left RCA after nearly  
30 years to join Curb at MGM.

Curb was one of the first to re-  
cognize the potential of The  
Sylvers who had three  
consecutive hits at  
MGM.





dience, but Cassidy was older than Donny, and Mike felt if the Osmonds hit then Donny and his fans could grow up with each other. He would never have the problem of outgrowing his fans as Cassidy did.

(3) The selection of the right material. To Mike this meant taking songs that had been proven (by being previous hits) from the past and re-recording them. This, in Curb's view, made the difficult selection of material much easier. It took a lot of the guesswork out of recording. Because they were previous hits qualified them as potential vehicles for Donny. But, even more important to Mike was "the lyrical content. Songs like 'Go Away Little Girl,' which had been a hit with Steve Lawrence; 'Too Young,' by Nat Cole; and 'Puppy Love' by Paul Anka were selected because they said something to Donny's 13-year-old audience." Today, as he looks back on the Osmonds' career, those three songs stand out as key elements in the group's success.

It is common knowledge that the Osmonds' first hit, "One Bad Apple," was recorded in Muscle Shoals by Rick Hall, an extremely successful producer. But what isn't known is the behind-the-scenes activity of Mike Curb to get Hall and that first song recorded. Up until the Osmonds came to Curb, they had had a series of unsuccessful label affiliations. They were known from the Andy Williams television show, but that notoriety did nothing for their sales. Curb's idea was to take them to Muscle Shoals, record them with Rick Hall and utilize an entirely different concept than the harmonious-type disks they had been releasing. Getting Hall and Osmonds together was almost as difficult as getting Republicans and Democrats to see eye-to-eye on every issue. Hall wasn't interested. He had a full recording slate and the Osmonds were not exactly the most exciting act around.

Mike, however, would not give up. He flew to Muscle Shoals and virtually kidnapped Hall and flew him to Las Vegas to see the group perform live. The same talent and magic which had captured Mike's imagination five years before did the same with Hall. In a short time the group was in Muscle Shoals and "One Bad Apple" was on the way to the top of the charts.

Interestingly, many in the industry thought the disk was the Jackson 5. Even some program directors were confused and "One Bad Apple" actually got r&b airplay. Some said that all Curb did was to copy the J-5 and what was so great about that? In answer, others have posed the question: "Well if it was that simple, why didn't somebody else think of it before?"

Nevertheless, "whether you liked the approach or not," Mike says, "it was certainly better than the barbershop quartet sound they had been making on records." The approach was an example of Curb's keen judgment about the market and what it would buy. In an industry full of brilliant, creative people the marketing aspect is often overlooked, as it was in the case of the Osmonds before Mike came along.

More than any group, Mike has shaped the Osmonds' career. From the "One Bad Apple" hit to a succession of others. Many predicted that once Donny's voice began to change the Osmonds would be through. But, Mike had prepared for the voice change and devised several clever innovations. One was stockpiling future singles. This would enable Donny to go through the voice change cycle without the pressure of having to record.

Mike's accomplishments with Marie's career are often taken for granted, too. He sent her to Nashville to record a country tune "Paper Roses" with Sonny James, which not only became a country hit but a giant pop hit as well.

Mike could easily have utilized a pop song in Marie's first sessions but he didn't. And, it wasn't just by chance that he sent her to Nashville for a country record. "The market was flooded with Osmond rock product and records by other similar acts. To record Marie in the same vein would have brought us to a situation in which one Osmond record was competing with another for airplay. There's only so much product of one type that a station is going to play and producers have got to realize that. Realistically, we would not have had much chance with Marie if we had started in the pop market."

Later he paired Donny and Marie on "Leaving It All Up To You," the song that not only became a big hit but also started the Donny and Marie "team" on the road to their own network television show.

As a result of his careful analysis of the market, the Osmonds now have five recording acts—the Osmonds (group), Donny, Marie, Donny and Marie and Jimmy Osmond, the youngest in the family. The Osmonds have not only grown with their audience but expanded it as well.

None of this, however, would have happened if it wasn't for the persistence of Mrs. Osmond. From the moment she met Curb she was "terribly impressed." Mike never tried to sell himself, however. As he does frequently, he offers assistance and then it's up to you. Mrs. Osmond finally decided she wanted Mike to cut the group. But, as many have discovered, it often takes more than one phone call running him down. "I wanted Mike to work with the kids and called a number of times but had trouble reaching him because of his travels. I don't know how long it took, but finally I did." And, in Mrs. Osmond's opinion, Pacific Telephone never performed a more valuable service.

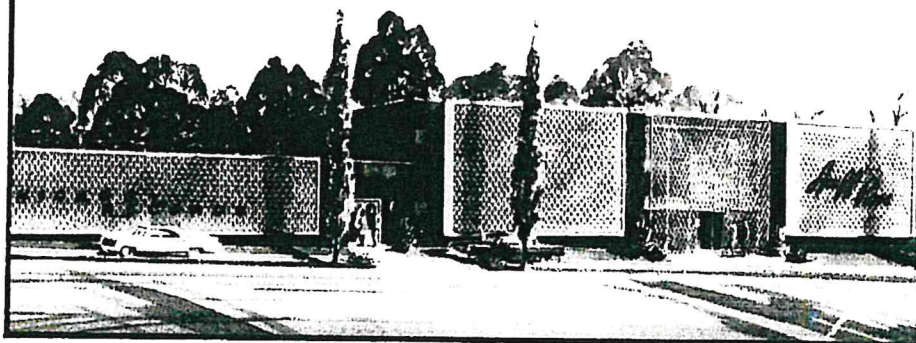
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## MC-2 R&B And Country

• Continued from page MC-26

Man," one of Lou's biggest hits and the song that captured a Grammy for "r&b record of the year."

It was also Mike who negotiated a highly complex arrangement with Al Bell (then of Stax) in which Isaac Hayes did "Shaft" and the marketing of the LP was a joint MGM/Enterprise Records venture which Mike and Bell put together. The Curb idea to utilize Isaac in the film wound up earning an Academy Award for the track.

Mike was also responsible for Richie Havens' "Here Comes The Sun" and the signing and recording of The Silvers who had three hits for MGM under his guidance.

At the same time, Curb was making MGM's country department the hottest in the industry. At one point, three of MGM's artists—Hank Williams Jr., Mel Tillis and Billy Walker—occupied the No. 1, 2 and 3 spots on the country charts.

Wherever Mike has gone he has attracted a following of both country and r&b artists. Eddy Arnold left RCA after nearly 30 years to join Curb at MGM as did Lou Rawls who was with Capitol. Both Billy Walker and Don Gibson came to MGM as well.

Probably one of the best examples of Curb's ability to blend country and r&b came when he left MGM and, at the request of Berry Gordy, formed Hitsville, Motown's first label venture into the country field. With Hitsville came T.G. Shepard who has had seven top 10 country tunes for the label. Mike also negotiated the agreement between Acuff/Rose's Hickory label and ABC. Curb participates in production when the need arises, acts as a consultant and shares in the profits.

Two of Warner/Curb's 10 artists are country-oriented with distinct possibilities of crossover. Jim Stafford, while with Curb at MGM, cut "Spiders And Snakes," both a country and pop hit. Hank Williams Jr. will have his first Warner/Curb LP out in late March. R&B will be represented as well with the Hues Corporation and its first album for Warner/Curb in April.

One of Mike's projects which he is particularly enthusiastic about is Tompall Glaser, a contemporary country act being produced by Ken Mansfield. Glaser, who worked with Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson on "Outlaws," just completed his first album with Mansfield, "Tompall Glaser And The Outlaw Band," which ABC is releasing through Mike's company.

Then, of course, there was Marie Osmond's first hit, a country tune, "Paper Roses," which went No. 1 for Mike. And, the Donny and Marie pairing, "I'm Leaving It All Up To You," another tune which was both a country and pop success.

In discussing country and r&b, Mike seldom separates the two. He is equally enthusiastic about both and anxious to dis-

cover the right man. "You need to be an expert in a field before you can understand the music. I don't believe that," he says. "All music has one common denominator—an important ingredient called the consumer. What a producer or head of a label has to do is put himself in the consumer's place and try to visualize the type of record he (or she) would like. The problem with our industry is that many executives are not capable of subverting their egos."

"Certainly, when our company deals with country, rock or r&b, we don't use the same producer for each. What's important, though, is getting the right producer. A label can be successful in any field, and in every field, if it follows those steps. I think a good example is MGM. When I was there if someone looked at the country chart and saw the amount of records we had on it, they might immediately peg us as a country-oriented company. At the same time, if they looked at the r&b chart, they might put us in that category. The point I'm trying to make is that you don't have to sacrifice one for the other."

In essence, the way Mike regards music is that "it's all international. We've all heard the cliché about music being the one international language there is. That's true. The problem is that you've got to believe and practice that belief."

If others haven't, Mike Curb certainly has. His international success with acts rivals that of his achievements with country and r&b acts. Curb's particularly proud of the success he's had with his Mike Curb Congregation on the international level. Aside from the concerts, the group has had eight LPs that were hits in Japan and "Burning Bridges" was—and still is—the biggest-selling international single in South Africa.

The Bellamys' "Let Your Love Flow" was Warner's biggest hit in West Germany. It occupied the No. 1 spot in that country for nine consecutive weeks. Equally as successful was the Four Seasons' "December 1963" in England.

For Capitol, Mike produced Al Martino's "Volare," a No. 1 hit in both Italy and Belgium. Sammy Davis Jr. who had his biggest domestic hit with "Candy Man," hit it internationally when Mike produced "Baretta's Theme" with Davis for 20th Century. The tune came up No. 1 in both Holland and Sweden.

Then, of course, there is Curb's major international accomplishment—the Osmonds, who have become Polygram International's biggest-selling act.

Whether it is country, r&b, international—or whatever—Curb has never been stopped by barriers. "That's one thing this industry has over all others. There are no barriers. All that counts is making the right record for the right market."

And, by all indications, Curb certainly can.

### CREDITS

Editor, Earl Paige. Written by Ron Tepper. Art design, J. Daniel Chapman and Kim Bucknam.

## Musical Chemistry

• Continued from page MC-10

you talk to them about it. But they do understand things like: 98-cent record costing \$1.29. That's really how we explain the OPEC price rise to them. We used terms they would understand. As far as explaining the controversy between government regulations and free enterprise we used a simple example. I asked the question 'How do you feel about not having any phonograph records in 1978?' With continued government interference that could happen. Maybe they don't understand environmental impact reports and the myriad of other regulations which a business has to follow, but they do relate to something that is going to affect them."

Mike's involvement in civic affairs is not something new. He's been doing it since his MGM days. In the midst of all the controversy over his drug stand, he quietly recruited some of the best known artists in the industry and put together a series of anti-drug spots which MGM distributed free to more than 1,000 radio stations. Another of his interests has been the United Negro College Fund where he's been an active fund-raiser and participant for several years. Mike's viewpoint has always been relatively conservative but that has not stopped him from seeing and talking to liberals in regards to their positions.

"The great thing about this country—just like this industry—is that we can all differ and yet each one of us has the right to present his (or her) viewpoint. This country has given me a great deal and I'm trying to repay it in some way through my civic activities. I think more of us in this industry, and other industries as well, should be doing the same if we hope to preserve and perpetuate what we have."

Does he have political ambitions?

Perhaps. There are many who are trying to talk him into running for a high California office next year. Whether or not he does remains to be seen. For the present, Mike's primary thrust remains twofold: his production company and the building of the Warner/Curb label. "I think," he says, "we have a long way to go before the production company and the label become what they should be. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, we'll have a production company and a label that are noted for a broad based appeal, and not for any one particular type of music. There's no reason why you can't have success with every type of music. All it takes is the right song and the right ingredients and you can have a hit with any artist in any area. That's the kind of organization we're trying to build."

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MARCH 5, 1977, BILLBOARD

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Mike, Eydie Gorme and Steve Lawrence became fast friends at MGM where Mike and Eydie combined talents for Oscar-nominated song, "It Was A Good Time" from "Ryan's Daughter."

## Warner/Curb Label

• Continued from page MC-14

sensus is in the picking of single records for release. Without a doubt, his judgment in this area is the match—and probably superior to—most people in the industry. His feel for the right release isn't the result of any particular schooling or experience. It comes right down to that controversial element, "gut reaction." While many executives have done well in this area, few can match the consistency or the track record he established and continues to maintain with the Osmonds plus the exceptional results he's had in a relatively short period with Warner/Curb. For example, how many labels would have acquired a master by a little-known singer, Larry Groce, to a novelty-tune titled "Junk Food Junkie," which turned into a Top 10 record.

"Mike has the ability to identify with the consumer and think like one," is the theory of one of Curb's close associates. "Too many record company executives and producers forget the consumer. All they consider is what they like and how good the song sounds in the studio." Or, as Casey Kasem puts it: "Mike stays on top of music and as a consequence he's had more remake hits than anybody I know of in the industry. There's nobody as successful at putting a new dress on an old record as Curb. That's part of his genius."



Mike and Al Bell (then of Stax) negotiated complex agreement which gave MGM its participation in the soundtrack "Shaft" and through it the extraordinary talents of Isaac Hayes.

the world. Here they are welcomed to Japan for the beginning of a tour. The group has released 8 LPs in Japan and is one of the most popular foreign groups to appear there. It has made numerous television appearances and also did a "command performance" at the White House. It's Top 10 single, "Burning Bridges," won an Academy Award nomination.



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*Dear Mike,*

*We congratulate you for being  
so handsome, so intelligent, so talented...  
and so wise to have recorded such great songs as*

★ RUBBER BALL

★ AT THE HOP

★ SIXTEEN CANDLES

★ THIS DIAMOND RING

★ PLAY OUR LOVE'S THEME

*Warmest wishes to you... and Carol, too!*

*Aaron and Abby*

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# Mike

Your 33's and 45's  
have all been really great,  
But we all know your biggest hit  
will be in '78

Thanks a million

*Casey Kasem*





*Best Wishes,  
Mike . . .*

*Terry Melcher*

*Dear Mike,*

*You're not only a  
great producer,  
but a great  
friend.*

*Russ Regan*

**Mike,**

***You're talented  
and friendly.***

***Need a couple  
of partners?***

***Lambert & Potter***

***IN APPRECIATION***

*your friend*  
**Ed Leffler**

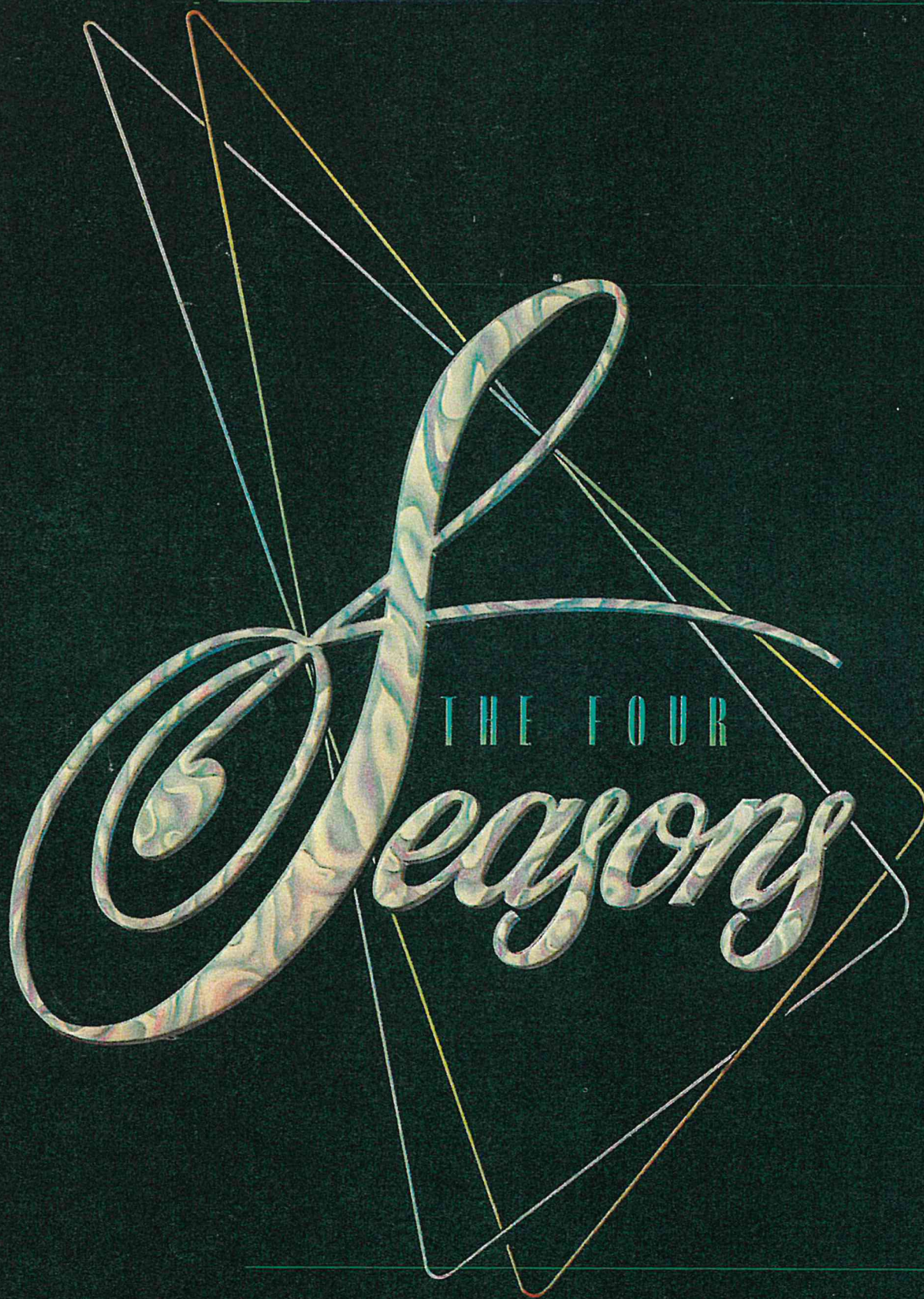


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FOR HIS TOUCH OF GOLD  
AND A WORLD  
FULL OF SUCCESSES.**

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THANKS FOR BELIEVING



THE FOUR  
*Seasons*

Bob Gaudio & Frankie Valli