

# The Sacramento Bee

March 9, 2004

## Down to Earth

### Rock-promoter team Another Planet taps its sphere of influence to pull in the hottest stars

Author: David Barton  
Bee Staff Writer  
Edition: METRO FINAL  
Section: SCENE  
Page: E1

Gregg Perloff and Sherry Wasserman remember how they used to feel during meetings in their old jobs.

"Every time we didn't believe in something, we'd speak up," Wasserman says. "It's in our natures to challenge things we don't believe in. And we found that every time we spoke up, our ideas weren't welcome, and they'd scratch their heads and say, 'You guys are from another planet.'

"And we'd say, 'That's right.' "

So Perloff and Wasserman, with a combined experience of nearly 60 years in rock-concert production - first with Bill Graham Presents and then Clear Channel Entertainment - waited for their contracts with the latter company to expire and then left for a place they felt more comfortable:

Another Planet.

That's the name of their concert production company, launched last July when they promoted Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's concert at San Francisco's Pacific Bell Park. Since then, they've continued with shows such as the Sacramento appearances by Shania Twain, Simon and Garfunkel and Linkin Park, and Wednesday's Metallica concert at Arco Arena. The team also has opened a San Francisco nightclub, The Independent, and is producing shows at that city's old Grand Ballroom at Sutter Street and Van Ness Avenue. They're also producing the upcoming reunion show by the Pixies at the University of California, Davis. Business partners Perloff and Wasserman both got their professional starts with Bill Graham Presents in the 1970s. Wasserman started out working in Berkeley High School's performing

arts department and joined Graham's organization in 1972. Perloff started promoting jazz and rock concerts as a student at the University of California, Berkeley, and joined BGP in 1977. Together with 14 other partners, they bought BGP from the Graham family in 1995. They in turn sold the company to SFX Entertainment in 1997. Soon thereafter, SFX was sold to Clear Channel. Perloff and Wasserman remained with the company through all the ownership changes until they left last year.

But the fledgling company with the great resume couldn't just focus on business right out of the gate. The Another Planet partners say they were sued by Clear Channel after their departure. Clear Channel's corporate office in Houston did not respond to inquiries about the litigation. The duo's departure from Clear Channel, where Perloff ran the Western concert division, was greeted with approval in many quarters, especially among those who had admired their work with BGP.

Gary Bongiovanni is editor of Pollstar magazine, which tracks the concert industry. He said Another Planet was instantly welcomed by agents, artists, concert promoters and other industry professionals.

"They (Another Planet) were the first birth of a major independent that we've seen in years," Bongiovanni says. "The trend has been the opposite: indies being swallowed up by Clear Channel. The fact that Gregg stood up to Clear Channel and is not intimidated ... that struck a chord with a lot of people."

That was underlined last month when, at Pollstar's 15th annual Concert Industry Awards, Perloff was given the Bill Graham Award for Concert Promoter of the Year. Perloff was a previous winner in 1991 and 1992 when he was still at BGP. The award was first given to Graham in 1990, then was renamed for him after his death.

If this looks like a David-and-Goliath situation, well, it is. But in this case, Perloff concedes he was a Goliath not so long ago. And now he doesn't mind the role reversal.

"It's a funny feeling going up against the 58th largest corporation in the world," he says during a recent interview at Another Planet's nine-person Berkeley office. "But we are unique in that we've been doing this for a long time. We're not amateurs."

Perloff is a businessman and not necessarily the most beloved man in rock 'n' roll. Like Graham before him, he's competitive. He has his detractors, but few are willing to speak about him publicly - just one sign of his clout.

An exception is Lee Smith, Perloff's replacement as president of BGP and executive vice president of the Western region of the music division of Clear Channel. Smith worked with or near Perloff and Wasserman for most of his time since joining BGP in 1988. Now he finds himself competing with them, and he speaks carefully.

He wouldn't comment on the lawsuit. But regarding Perloff and Wasserman's difficulties at Clear Channel, he said, "If you've only done it one way, everything else is foreign. I don't see any insurmountable problems that are inherent to working in a public corporation."

He said, yes, Another Planet came out of the box with a number of big shows. But that was due to the temporary void left at BGP/Clear Channel by Perloff and Wasserman's departure.

Meanwhile, Clear Channel is getting back up to speed. Observers agree that, since Clear Channel actually owns a number of the area's biggest venues - including the Bay Area's Shoreline Amphitheatre and the Sacramento area's Sleep Train Amphitheatre - its clout will likely return.

And Another Planet is not necessarily viewed as the underdog by many smaller concert producers. Now they have to worry about Another Planet taking shows away from them. Some, though they would not speak on the record, fear that bidding wars for concerts between Clear Channel and Another Planet may drive up ticket prices.

Perloff and Wasserman say, and others agree, that ticket prices are set by the artists and determined by the market, which will vote with its dollars if prices go too high.

Wherever ticket prices go, Another Planet has entered a competitive market. It produces concerts in many of the same venues - Arco Arena, the Memorial Auditorium, Freeborn Hall at UC Davis - used by the other promoters. Perloff and Wasserman insist there is a difference, but others are unconvinced.

"As far as the public is concerned, there will be no difference between a Clear Channel show or an Another Planet or Concerts West show," says Mike Fahn, who has long presented concerts in Sacramento.

Still, Another Planet's Perloff and Wasserman do have a connection to Northern California and its concert-promoting past. That lends the company a nostalgic air.

They aim to evoke a time when concerts were not cookie-cutter corporate events, and money didn't seem to be the be-all and end-all of the process.

"I love making a lot of people happy," Wasserman says. "You see 1,000 or 20,000 people coming through the doors at an event you brought, and they're thrilled.

"That's the get-off," she says. "The business is just business."

\* \* \*

The Bee's David Barton can be reached at (916) 321-1075 or [dbarton@sacbee.com](mailto:dbarton@sacbee.com).

Metallica

WITH: Godsmack

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday

WHERE: Arco Arena

TICKETS: \$57.25 and \$77.25

INFORMATION: (916) 928-6900

Caption:

Sacramento Bee / Michael A. Jones

Gregg Perloff and Sherry Wasserman, above, are concert promoters who have formed Another Planet. The company has brought performers such as Metallica, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Shania Twain, and Simon and Garfunkel to Sacramento.

Copyright 2004 The Sacramento Bee

Record Number: SAC\_0404897474