



Discover A&M

by Leslie Pfenninger, *OnAMRecords.com*



Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss founded **A&M Records** in 1962 – with \$200 and a handshake – and nurtured its rise into the world's largest independent record label. Say their names and you hear their songs – The Tijuana Brass, Burt Bacharach, the Carpenters, Sergio Mendes, Quincy Jones, Carole King, Peter Frampton, Janet Jackson, Styx, Supertramp, Bryan Adams, the Police, the Go-Go's, George Winston, Amy Grant, Sting, Sheryl Crow.

Alpert and Moss averaged two Grammys, seven gold records and four platinum albums every year for the next 30 years, and A&M Records evolved from an easy listening label into one that successfully added every musical genre. A&M garnered over 200 gold records, nearly 100 platinum and multiplatinum records in the US and countless awards from around the world. Sales figures and awards are the legacy of the A&M story.

In 1966, A&M Records made its permanent home in the Charlie Chaplin Studios. Artists and employees often said that the A&M lot felt like home, because that was the "Alpert & Moss" way: to respect people; to be open to ideas; to ensure an atmosphere supporting creativity for artists and employees. Herb and Jerry often walked around the lot visiting A&M's departments, and they knew every employee.



Today, the A&M Family still has the same good feelings about the company and its founders. In many ways, the people of A&M and its culture are Alpert and Moss's greatest achievement.

A&M became the label that looked for longevity in its relationships, and the family atmosphere also provided A&M's edge to compete with major labels. As a privately-owned company, it could not rely on stock issues or subsidiaries to raise large sums of money for artist advances, recording and promotion costs. Instead, A&M offered its artists more time and creativity in building image and career, getting their recordings played on radio and television, and presenting artists to retail and the public. A&M could develop an album campaign for months longer than a major label. "We weren't interested in the beat of the week," said Alpert.

A&M wanted its people and its partnerships to thrive at what they did best. Artists, employees and label managers affiliated with A&M share similar stories of why they chose this label. Will Ackerman, founder of Windham Hill Records said, "I went with A&M because it was the only label that showed any intelligence. They didn't want to usurp us, but to facilitate us. I kept telling them what they couldn't do -- till finally Jerry Moss yelled at me, "Look, Will, we really don't understand this! We just want you... to go do it!"



The label was praised by other industry executives as very artist-oriented, and committed to having the music come first. They noted the quality of the label, its ability to adapt to changes in the industry and the public taste and the consistency of its management, and even the label they admired most. A&M's people remember integrity, credibility, working hard and the wonderful associations they made. To that, Jerry Moss would add, "Have fun!"

A&M's contributions also extended into the greater community. It established the *Y.E.S. To Jobs* program for inner city youths to work in many areas of the recording industry... and other labels were quick to join in their support as well. A&M studio time was donated for charity recordings including "We Are the World," that provided relief to famine-stricken Ethiopia, and "A Very Special Christmas" for Special Olympics, which also became the biggest selling charity album project to date.

Alpert and Moss donated their company's papers to the UCLA Music Library Special Collections, where they form an invaluable resource for the study of American popular music. The collection includes sound recordings, manuscript musical arrangements, correspondence, photographs, promotional materials, posters, gold albums, books, and collectibles.



In 2007, Sting said of the signing of The Police to A&M, "We always felt we'd be looked after," and of Alpert and Moss, "I have never to this day met two finer gentlemen. They began distributing records from a garage in Hollywood and wound up with the largest and most successful independent record company in the world," and "You felt like you could sit on their desks and sing your dreams to them."

For more information about A&M Records and its artists, visit www.onAMRecords.com