

# Talent & Venues

## More Salem Country Shows Set Series Begins Second Leg With November L.A. Date

By PAUL GREIN

LOS ANGELES—Salem's Country Gold '82 concert series, which reportedly grossed \$1.9 million in nine dates last spring, is set to begin its second leg of seven shows Nov. 5 at the Sports Arena here. The show stars Alabama, Mickey Gilley and Johnny Lee and is opened by the Thrasher Brothers.

Tickets, which were priced at \$12.50 across the board on the spring tour, will jump to \$15 for this second fleet of shows, according to promoter Sonny Simmons, head of Nashville's Century II Promotions.

"For the entire 16-show series to wind up in the black, some refinements had to be made," Simmons says. "Some cost cuts here and ticket price adjustments there. The philosophy of the show is to give the most for the least, but there's a limit to what we can give.

"We have 130 people on the road, 12 buses, five trucks and five limos, and the expenses warranted the raise. Also, we need 14,000-seaters just to lay down the show, and on the fall tour we're going to be playing some smaller halls. We won't break even on our shows in Albuquerque or Las Cruces even though those are good country markets."

Simmons says the spring shows averaged 85% of capacity in venues holding from 15,000 to 20,000. He says the most successful date was the Mini-Dome of the Silverdome in Pontiac, Mich., where there was 24,000 paid attendance; the least successful was Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, which drew 13,900 out of a capacity of 18,500.

All of the shows are set for indoor coliseums, except the last date Nov. 21 at the Gulfstream Race Track at a fairgrounds in Hallandale, Fla. Sim-

mons says that date is an experiment to see how the show works out of doors. The show, which runs four and a half hours, features sound by Clair Brothers and lights by Bandit Lights of Knoxville.

Simmons says the reason for scheduling the shows only in the spring and fall is that most country artists are busy playing parks and fairs in the summer. This is the first nationwide tour for Simmons' Century II Promotions, best known for its involvement in fairs.

The Salem Country Gold '82 concerts also mark R.J. Reynolds' first full-scale venture in tour sponsorship, according to Simmons.

Jim Johnston, Reynolds' executive vice president, says: "The blending of Salem and country music is a natural. Country settings have been a key part of virtually all of Salem's advertising throughout its 25-year history."



Billboard photo by Robert Matheu

**CLOSING NIGHT**—Tom Petty joins the Plimsouls at the closing night show at the Whisky in Los Angeles. The venue has closed its doors, at least temporarily.

## Hollywood Palace Ready For Reopening This Month

LOS ANGELES—The landmark Hollywood Palace is set to reopen at the end of this month as the Palace, a combination video/film production facility and showcase for live and multimedia entertainment.

The reopening comes more than four years after principals Dennis and Beverly Lidtke and Paul Henderson bought the property for \$750,000. Construction began in 1978, but high interest rates forced its suspension until earlier this year.

Dennis Lidtke, chief operating officer of Gribbitt Ltd., a locally-based graphics, typesetting, color separation and printing complex, says the total investment in the Palace was in excess of \$6 million. "The cost of money over the four years ran that way up," he notes.

Lidtke says the Palace will be geared to video production activity on weekdays and concerts and cabaret events on weekends. "The evenings will always include some sort of live concert activity in conjunc-

tion with straight disco," he says. "I'd like to see nights for country, jazz and new wave."

The Palace's director of video production is Dee Baker, who has worked on tv specials by Lily Tomlin and Neil Diamond. Video productions already taped in the theater include an hour-long Sheena Easton special, since sold to HBO; "The American Movie Awards," a recent two-hour NBC-TV special; and "Merv At The Palace," starring talk show veteran Merv Griffin.

While the Palace won't officially reopen until Oct. 29-30, the video production stage has been in use since spring. The venue has also hosted several private parties.

Lidtke hopes labels will use the club both to showcase acts and to shoot and screen videos. "The facility was built for the industry," he says, "and I hope the industry can regain a level of financial health that will enable it to use it. If the record business survives, I'll survive."

## EASY AS ABC? U.K. Band Eyes Elaborate Show For Upcoming Tour Of U.S.

By CARY DARLING

LOS ANGELES — Not many groups travel as part of a 16-piece entourage and have stage shows with changing sets, but that is exactly what Mercury's ABC, touring the U.S. in December, plans to do. The quartet, which is charting with its single "The Look Of Love" and album "The Lexicon Of Love," believes in performing on a grand scale and is somewhat contemptuous of much of the British "new wave" they are lumped with for believing otherwise.

"If it was good enough for Burt Bacharach and the Temptations, why couldn't it be good enough for us?" asks 24-year-old Martin Fry, lead vocalist for the Sheffield, England-based band. "A lot of people, especially in the U.K., shortchange themselves. They're cheapskates. They're using backing tapes, but why shouldn't people feel the full-bodied sound of a string section?"

Why not? It's 1982. There's no reason to diminish your audience and yourself."

The 16-piece band would include the four members of ABC (Mark White, keyboards and guitar; David Palmer, percussion; Steven Singleton, saxophone) plus at least six strings, two keyboards, one bassist and other instruments. Venues will also be rather unconventional, although nothing has yet been set. In Los Angeles, for example, the band is eyeing the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. It is these types of actions, they feel, which will separate them from the rest of the British new music scene to Americans. "It's irritating and inevitable to some extent, but the music does speak for itself," says Fry. "It stands on its own two feet. To be seen in the same context as A Flock Of Seagulls, Haircut One Hundred and Talk Talk is upsetting."

The tour may seem grandiose, but it does fit the tone and mood of the album, which recently entered the U.K. charts at No. 1. The quartet, which claims it writes all its songs as a group so no individual writer credits are given, makes heavily-orchestrated music (produced by Trevor Horn, who used to be in Yes and the Buggles) which has echoes of Phil Spector and mid '60s Motown. Even the name, ABC, was a 1970 Jackson 5 song. "That might have had something to do with it," laughs Fry. "But it was the idea of just picking out the first three letters of the alphabet rather than associating ourselves with any specific sort of music."

"We're interested in an international sense," adds Mark White. "A lot of new English groups mean nothing all around the world. We thought a name like ABC could appeal to any sort of European-based country in the world."

The band likes to think of itself as making motion pictures for the ear. "I like the idea of songs being three-minute epics," comments Fry. "Soundtracks with a widescreen effect where you can throw in everything."

It was producer Horn who helped them do this. "We were very ambitious, but it would lead to frustration. Trevor could articulate a lot of our ideas. He'd say, instead of using a string machine, like on the demo, why not use a real string orchestra?" recalls Fry.

"He taught us that whatever we want to do, do it," adds White. "Why not have this on the record? Let's do it instead of thinking an idea is ludicrous and not doing it."

It is somewhat ironic that ABC has this attitude, as it comes from economically depressed Northern England, where the musical norm has been such bands as Human League, and Orchestral Maneuvres In The Dark, who have a darker, more minimalist, and often more political approach. "A lot of times political themes wind up as sloganeering. Some of the best political statements are just a maturity in writing," comments Fry. "Like 'The Message,' the 'Temptations' 'Take A Look Around,' Stevie Wonder's" (Continued on page 35)

## Talent In Action

### OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN TOM SCOTT

Universal Amphitheatre,  
Universal City, Calif.  
Tickets: \$17.50, \$15

Newton-John's first local appearance in five years—since her co-starring role in "Grease" revived and redirected her career—was a total triumph, eliciting the boisterous fan response normally seen only at rock shows.

Part of the reason for that reaction is that the singer includes rockish material in her set, from the '50s-shaded "You're The One That I Want" to the new wave-influenced "Heart Attack." Newton-John also sings with greater strength and conviction, even on the older ballads. Her emphatic vocals gave an extra emotional dimension to the rueful "Sam" and the plaintive "Please Mr. Please."

Another key to the Oct. 7 show's success was the simplicity of the staging by Kenny Ortega, who has not always exercised such restraint, as seen in his overblown extravaganza for Cher last year. Because special effects here were used sparingly, they achieved greater impact, as when a glittery substance fell during "Silvery Rain," a power ballad from the "Physical" album.

The staging was also impressive on "Suddenly," which Newton-John sang with backup singer Dennis Tufano. The two started out sitting shyly on steps at either end of the stage and slowly came together as the song's tempo built. And the sweetness and melodrama of "I Honestly Love You" was smartly offset by the offhanded way it was staged, with Newton-John

knocking on a stack of towels following her work-out with "Physical."

The show also made effective use of video. It opened with a montage of Newton-John's career milestones; included a video clip of "The Promise," which features the singer cavorting with dolphins, and closed with screened "credits" for band and crew members.

There were two costume changes, but the only props in the show were a leather jacket for "You're The One That I Want" and a cowboy hat for "If You Love Me Let Me Know," performed as part of four-song country medley. Among the other standout selections: the beguiling "Magic" and the irrepressible "Make A Move On Me."

Newton-John was backed by a seven-man band fronted by saxophonist Tom Scott. The ensemble also opened the show with a 30-minute set laced with songs from Scott's new Elektra album, "Desire." Highlight of the set was a powerful reading of Paul McCartney's "Maybe I'm Amazed." PAUL GREIN

### DENIECE WILLIAMS JEFFREY OSBORNE

Radio City Music Hall,  
New York City  
Admission: \$17.50, \$15, \$12.50

This concert matched two of the best singers on the current pop music scene, one already established as a consistent solo act, the other seemingly a sure bet to be one.

Headliner Williams turned in a solid, if unspectacular, show, leaning heavily on material

from her two Thom Bell-produced Columbia albums. As expected, recent hits such as "Silly" and "It's Gonna Take A Miracle" were well received. However, the set's most interesting moments came when Williams, a born-again Christian, performed her trademark gospel song "Jesus Is Amazing" and Billie Holiday's "God Bless The Child." The songs provided a contrast in styles that Williams exploited well. On "Child," her soaring voice, far removed from Holiday's sultry delivery, made for a very distinctive interpretation of the jazz classic.

Williams performed in a tight fitting outfit of red, orange, and silver made of bright reflective material, noteworthy since it suggested a conscious shift from the almost angelic appearance she has projected onstage in the past.

During Williams' performance, opener Jeffrey Osborne came out to duet with her on "Too Much, Too Little, Too Late." At his appearance, the audience's female fans reacted with the kind of enthusiasm usually reserved for a Teddy Pendergrass or Peabo Bryson. Singing most of the songs on his self-titled A&M debut and a couple of tasty chestnuts from his days as LTD's lead singer, Osborne showed considerable vocal gifts and an energetic attitude which made him an immediate favorite. A dramatic, well-crafted performance of LTD's finest song, "Love Ballad," provided the highlight of an extremely polished set.

Williams and Osborne shared the same 11-member band and the same basic stage set-up. Doing double duty was an outstanding crew of musicians including the Average White Band's (Continued on page 34)



Billboard photo by Bob Mort  
**CHANCE SHOW**—Cyclops Records artist Jan Miles plays the Chance in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., opening for Marshall Crenshaw.

The use of video clips in clubs and other venues is changing their atmosphere, suggests the operator of a rock'n'roll video party service. It's also said to be spurting record sales, Page 32.

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