

Rock 'n' roll promoters singing to tune of inflation

Adverse economic conditions have cut into the earnings of rock 'n' roll concert promoters.

"Things have definitely been hurt by the economy," said Eddie Gaddis, head of The Agora, a Dallas rock club.

"There's less money being made by promoters, less money being made by record stores, less money being made by record companies and ticket prices have gone up \$1 or \$2 a person during the last year."

This summer, there were more rock acts than in previous years, Gaddis said, and major groups — such as Fleetwood Mac — are touring with smaller backup groups with one or two hits to their name, such as the new group, Men At Work.

"People are still going out to the rock 'n' roll concerts, but they're not selling out like they did last year," Gaddis said. "This year, your big concerts have 3,000 or 4,000 seats left. But there are more shows."

Radio stations have raised advertising rates, he said, and record companies that formerly subsidized concert productions and advertising cannot afford to any longer.

"CBS dropped about 300 people last week," Gaddis said recently. "Fewer people are buying records."

One of the biggest rock concert promoters in the Southwest is Louis Messina, president of Pace Concerts Inc. in Houston, who handled 200 concerts last

year in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Alabama.

"Rock is doing real well, but some of the bands are not doing as well as they used to," said Messina. "Business is down 20 to 25 percent, but we're still doing real well."

Like all of the promoters interviewed by UPI, Messina declined to discuss specific financial figures.

He said rock concerts generate numerous other businesses — parking, T-shirts, food concessions, advertising, stage hands and security guards.

"It generates a lot of money for a lot of businesses," said Messina. "You name it. I enjoy the business. It's fast-paced. You set your own destiny. The money is good, but I just like be-

ing a part of the entertainment business."

Asked if the growth of cable television threatened to harm the concert business, Messina said: "The thing that TV misses is the excitement of being there, which you can't capture by being in your house. Cable is being abused in the entertainment field and I don't see it taking away from concert business."

"I think we'll always have big acts. The atmosphere at concerts is such that nothing can take its place."

Another Dallas promoter, Mark Lee, concentrates on the new rock — he calls it new music — and has brought the Police, The Clash, Squeeze, Talking Heads and Steel Pulse to town.

"The economy is not real good," said Lee, who operates a

punk club called the Hot Klub. "You've got to move toward smaller concerts because there are more groups bidding for the same entertainment dollar."

Lee said, "The large shows are falling considerably short of the anticipated gross. New music is thriving, but that's not to say all my shows did as well as expected. They did not. New music is affected by the economy as much as the old music."

The Doobie Brothers, on their final national tour, are breaking up because of economics, said Lee, who doubted members of the group "would be separating if the money was rolling in like it used to several years ago."

The premier rock concert promotion company in Kansas City is News West Productions, head-

ed by Chris Fretz. News West is working in partnership with Contemporary Productions of St. Louis.

"Kansas City, considering what's been coming through, is a great concert town," Fretz said. "But right now I don't think anybody's making money in the market because there is too much competition in the market."

The most profitable shows are at stadiums, he said, noting that 53,000 people saw Foreigner in May at Arrowhead Stadium.

"People just think you hire a band, sell some tickets and put a lot of money in a bank," Fretz said. "For every three shows, you have one or two losers. That's what makes it such a marginal business."

Melissa as wholesome as her image

NEW YORK (UPI) — Melissa Gilbert, her schedule jammed with interviews and talk show dates, fidgeted, picked at her fingernails and compulsively lit matches from a box left on the restaurant table.

She was not happy — nor was she ordering lunch.

She was not happy because she was in New York on a promotional tour and not on the set of "Little House on the Prairie" where she grew, by her own definition, from "a little buck-toothed brat" to "just your basic wife-mother-type character."

She was not ordering lunch because she already had dined. "I eat one meal a day," she said. "Today I had a hot dog. That's probably all I'll eat — just whatever I get my hands on. If I feel like eating something,

I'll eat it, and then that's it."

Melissa Gilbert is 18 now, and 18 is a goal she has had since she was 9 and just starting out on Michael Landon's long-running Nielsen champion retitled this season at NBC as "Little House: A New Beginning."

Being 18 allows her to work 18 hours a day if necessary, and apart from running her own production company, studying writing and theatrical production at UCLA and waging her own private war on drugs, that is exactly what she wants to do.

"In this business, you can only work eight hours if you're under 18," she said. "The show carried me through until I was 18. Now I can work all hours."

"I am definitely a workaholic. I get very antsy when I'm not working. I am a very creative

person and that's the way I get it all out of my system. By expressing myself creatively, I get out all my aggressions."

Another match flared as she thought back over the course of her life.

"It's definitely a solid part of my life," she said. "The most important years of my life have been spent on that show. It's been a wonderful experience."

In the new series, Miss Gilbert — a child no longer — marries and takes over the "Little House" family now that Landon has left it. He will return for occasional guest roles but the burden now is hers — both dramatically and in terms of Nielsen ratings that have sustained it for a decade.

"As long as the show goes, I'll be there," she said.

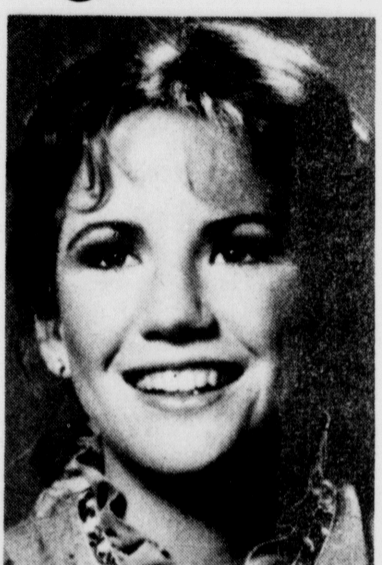
Only drug abuse among the young inflames her as much as her work. In her spare time, she works with Nancy Reagan in a volunteer agency called ACTION — a labor that infuses her normal intensity with missionary zeal.

"Peer pressure is the number one cause of the use of marijuana today, so what we're trying to do is cause reverse peer pressure — pressure not to use drugs," she said. "I go and talk to young people my age on a level they can understand."

She is prepared to educate them with hard, cold, lethal facts.

"As the increase of the use of marijuana among teen-agers has increased, so have highway deaths and suicides," she said.

"Every year, it starts younger and younger — 10-year-old children, 8-year-old children ... I see so many young people who are handicapped — who can't walk, who can't talk, who can't



Melissa Gilbert

see, who can't hear — who would give anything to be normal.

"Then I see people who are normal and healthy ... frying their brains and ruining everything just to be dizzy. Who needs to be dizzy? What's the point?"

No mere chemical could raise Melissa Gilbert above the high she has on life, but it is not her manic intensity that comes across.

"I have this image to people," she said, "this very wholesome, angelic image."

And is she really that wholesome?

She lit another match and arched a fine dark eyebrow.

"Yes," she said. "And tired. Wholesome, angelic and tired."

Her fans will buy "wholesome" and the millions of youngsters she exhorts to try "wholesome" on for size may buy "angelic," but there is one thing none of them ever will see.

With Melissa Gilbert, they will never know about "tired."

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Here's the answer for today's crossword

ACROSS

1. ONE (6)

2. NINE (5)

3. EIGHT (5)

4. SEVEN (5)

5. SIX (3)

6. FIVE (4)

7. FOUR (4)

8. THREE (3)

9. TWO (3)

10. ONE (3)

DOWN

1. ONE (3)

2. TWO (3)

3. THREE (3)

4. FOUR (4)

5. FIVE (4)

6. SIX (3)

7. SEVEN (5)

8. EIGHT (5)

9. NINE (5)

10. TEN (4)

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Bridge

ASK OMAR

Q.— We have a player in our game who repeatedly makes psychic bids. Are such bids legal? If they are, can you either suggest a defense against them or a way of getting that player out of our game? —J. Rosenberg, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

(This question has been awarded our weekly prize.)

A.— First of all, there is nothing illegal about a psychic bid — there is nothing in the Laws to prevent them. Next, I am not sure that you should want to remove someone from your game who psyches regularly. In all the years that I have played bridge, I have yet to meet a psychic bidder who is a winner. And to confuse you even more, there is no real defense against a psychic bid!

There are a number of nuisance bids that are difficult to handle. That's why they are used. The type that come most readily to mind is a preempt. Sometimes an opposing preemptive bid will catch you with an awkward hand that you just cannot handle, and, as a result, it will succeed.

At least with a preemptive bid you know something about the bidder's hand. You know that he has a hand of less than opening bid strength and length in the suit that he has bid. The trouble with a psychic bid is that you don't know that the bid is psychic when it is made; you only find out later.

Here is a golden rule to follow, and it will not only save you a lot of money but will make your life easier. Presume that any bid made

by your opponent is genuine until it is proved otherwise, and act accordingly.

The psychic bidder must reveal that his bid was a bluff early in the auction, or else he will get his side into serious trouble. For instance, suppose that the bidding has gone:

North East South West
1 ♥ Pass 1 ♠ Pass

South's one spade response was forcing for one round, yet North elected to pass. Ergo, North's opening bid was psychic! After all, he was risking missing game or even slam by passing partner's response.

I vividly remember a hand I held not too long after I had started playing bridge. We were vulnerable; our opponents were not. The dealer was known for his psychic bidding. I picked up:

♦QJ109xx ♥AQx ♦Qxx ♣x

Sure enough, the dealer opened one spade! My first thought was: "Of course, he's psyching again. I had better get in there with a double and then bid spades to show him up." Fortunately, I remembered the advice I gave you earlier in the column, so I passed.

To my surprise, my opponents ended in four spades, which I doubled for a handsome profit! My right-hand opponent had opened on a five-card headed by the ace and my left-hand opponent had a doubleton king and eventually gave opener a spade preference. Since my partner had a yarrowbrough, had I entered the auction, it would have been the opponents who reaped the dividends, rather than we.