**QUESTIONS FOR POP GEEK HEAVEN NEWSLETTER:**

Below is a list of a variety of questions. Feel free to pick and choose which you’d like to answer. Pick between 7-10 questions. What to do: take this document and simply answer the questions you’d like to address in this document and then send it back to me w/ your answers via email at: [musicgeekheaven@gmail.com](mailto:musicgeekheaven@gmail.com) . If you could include a JPG of your logo and, if possible, a picture of yourself, that would be great.

**HISTORY & BACKGROUND:**

1. So, was there ‘a moment’, an epiphany when you realized that you absolutely were going to work in music? Along with that, if I went back and talked to your friends in high school or college/university and asked them what kind of work that you would have ended up doing, what they would they say?

I can’t remember when I didn’t want to be in the music business. I didn’t have an older sibling, so I didn’t get into buying singles and albums when I was thirteen. I remember filling out my 8th grade bio page. There was a section for “fantasy future.” I put “run my own record label.” I just *knew* that was going to happen, so I changed it at the last minute to “to be 6 feet tall.” That I knew wasn’t going to happen.

1. A&R is extremely difficult. You have to be either two years ahead of the time or ten years behind it. I came “this close” to signing some very big UK bands but lost them to larger companies that. Had deep pockets. I had the ears but not the coin.

So I had to come up with an idea that would us bands that would break without “breaking the bank.”

When we imported albums into America from the UK, UK labels fawned over us—we not only bought the finished goods, but made the deals more lucrative for the UK label if and when we “broke” the record over here before they had a deal. Back then there were many independent UK companies that were trend setters in England and were always looking for licensing deals in the US-Chrysalis, Virgin, Island, etc. all used our services.

The idea was The F.A.R.M. Team.

I signed The Cure (and put together “Boys Don’t Cry,”) Siouxee and The Banshees, Simple Minds, Judas Priest etc. All under my F.A. R. M. team concept. I get the first album, break the band, and the UK label gets to sign the to a huge deal in the US. It worked like a charm. Why? Because it seemed JEM was the only company that realized these artists were incredible and waiting to break over here. The UK record companies were all too willing to agree to my concept. Melody Maker called me “the import czar”.

4.Tell us a bit about the time when you decided to start your label/company – walk us through the reason d’etre for doing this crazy kind of calling.

The only record store in Lancaster, PA where I went to college, sold albums at list price. So I began to have new releases and hit rock albums send to me from a NJ One Stop I had worked during the previous (1770) summer. It snowballed to where I had other kids selling for me in different dorms. I told my two childhood friends, Jeff Tenenbaum (Cornell and Ed Grossi (Wesellyn) they should start doing it as well. When we graduated from College in May, 1971, we took a trip together throughout Europe and Israel. Whilst in England (note the UK colloquialism) I sought out my Holy Grail, a copy of the Who’s “Direct Hilts” that you could not get in the USA. I found it and realized, “if I wanted it, there must be lots of other kids who did too” We looked up a record exporter and met with him. We ordered “Direct Hits,” “Smash Your Head Against The Wall” by John Entwistle, “Empty Sky” by Elton John (which would go on to be one of the top five import albums in history, with Elton’s personal approval) and some “Backtrack” re-issues from Track records. It took 6 weeks to get that first box of albums. I later years, we shipped our records from our own office warehouse and label in Longon, Pacific Records—it then took overnight!

JEM started in a trailer in the parking lot of that One Stop in August, 1971. We eventually moved to an office/warehouse complex in South Plainfield in 1973. We outgrew that warehouse and moved to one three times the size in 1977. By that time, we had opened an office and warehouse in London and formed a partnership with Moby Disc owner Mark Frajulian to open JEM West. (JEM Texas would open in 1984)

Passport Records, our front-line artist label started in 1973 in a pretty bizarre manner. I had taken a course at The New School. One of the speakers was Seymour Stein. I remembered what he looked like and when I was at the historic David Bowie and the Spiders from Mars concert at Radio City. There was a very long line at intermission for the bathrooms. The guy standing in front of me was Seymour. So I whispered to him “Thies Van Leer” the yodeling keyboardist from Focus, the Dutch band we were breaking all over the country with “Hocus Pocus”. I knew Sire had the US rights. He turned around and wanted to know who I was. When he found out I was guy from JEM, he asked me to come to his office to meet with him and Richard Gottehrer the next day. And that’s how we started the partnership between JEM and Sire that was the most important three years (I was 23 at the time)

5.What are some of the more difficult areas of working in the music business that most people have no idea about?

I don’t think many people think about how often records lose money. Publicity, promotion, marketing, touring. They all cost money. Unless you have a 360 deal with the artist, your only source of income is the music. The real money today is in live performance. The bigger the artist, the bigger the spread between record sales and live income.

6.As label folks doing this for a real time, we often get asked who some of our favorite artists that we have signed and worked with are. Take as much space as you want – talk about some of them.

The members of Genesis,( individually,) Larry Fast (SYNERGY) The Roches, The Weeklings, Richard Barone,

7.Funny Artist or Business-related Story – Share.

I got a call one day from Mike Smith of the Dave Clark Five. He had gotten my telephone number from Eno’s girlfriend (go figure). He was in NYC making a commercial for TWA and wanted to get ahold of Larry Fast to do the synthesizers. We had been importing an EP by Mike that including a medley of the DC5’s first three hit singles. It sounded just like the originals. I asked Mike how he got it to sound like the DC5 singles. He said “Who do you think did it the first time!” (putting an end to the idea that Dave Clark had produced the tracks in the 60’s)

8.What have been some of your favorite releases so far in 2019 – both on your label and in general, in any genre?

The Anderson Council “Worlds Collide” and The Gold Needles “Through a Window”.

9.What is on the docket with your plans for the rest of 2019 and going into 2020? What has you particularly excited and geek to bring into the world?

The forthcoming next album by The Weeklings, which has just been completed, will be coming out in January. I am looking forward to hearing more of Nick PIunti and the Complicated Men’s album and the Jem debut of The Bookends. The Grip Weeds will be walking downstairs to their studio to begin recording their next album in November. It going to be very different from “Trip Around The Sun” which came out last year.

**MUSIC FANDOM:**

Was there a particular artist(s) that inspired you to work in music as a vocation? What was it about them that flowed into the marrow of your bones that changed your DNA?

Don’t Think About It – Just Type: 3-5 albums that you can’t imagine not ever being released because they changed your life.

Who’s Next

Genesis Foxtrot

The Beatles Sgt Pepper

Nektar Remember The Future

10.Live Music: Favorite Concert Ever? First Concert/show attended? Last show you went to?

The Who at The Fillmore East May 19, 1967. I heard Tommy in it’s entirety BEFORE it was on the radio or in the stores. Blew me away

11.State of your Music Collection by Percentages of LPs/CDs/7”singles and, if applicable, cassette and 8-track tapes? Feel free to share estimated amounts, if so inclined.

Almost all of my collection (and I had all the rare import stuff) was either ruined by a hurricane in 2001 or sold to Princetion Record Exchange after I had Leukemia.

12.So, embracing the streaming world – or resisting?

As JEM semi-artist Peter Noone (he has recorded singles with three of my artists already and a fourth in in pre production) has said “My fans don’t stream except at 2am in the morning—and that’s in the bathroom.

If you have a rap or pop artist, streaming is reality. Power pop fans want the CD or vinyl. They don’t stream and I find they don’t even download.

Related to that, as a fellow music-loving geek and prognosticating a bit, what does the experience for a music-loving geek look like as you gaze into your crystal ball?

13. As it relates to music fandom, is there something you’d like to bemoan, whine or rant against – or feel encouraged or inspired by? Take the floor and write away.

I blame Steve Jobs for destroying the record business. He ruined the concept of buying the album by convincing the majors to allow consumers to purchase an album track. That the record companies agreed to this makes them complicent, but it never would have happened if not for I-tunes. I do own an I-phone, I-pad, and an I-mac book but I do not buy books from Apple, only Amazon, as it was Apple that conspired with book publisher to raise the cost of an online book purchase $9.95 to $14.95 in one day!

What question should I have asked you, that I did not ask? Ask that and answer.