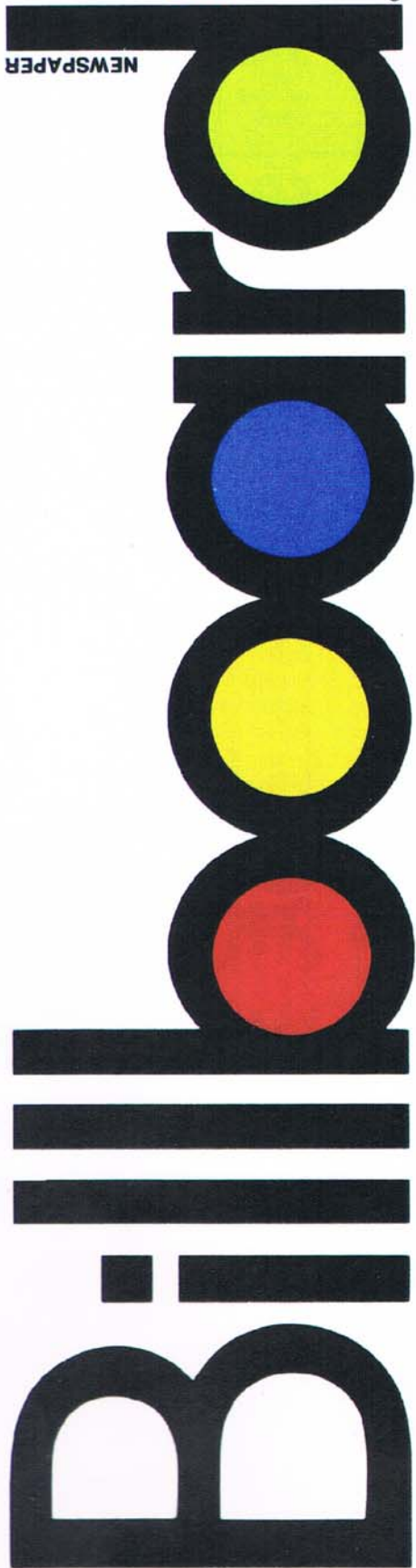


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Music Video

PROGRAMMING

'Infomercial' Touts Music

'The Street Buzz' Educates Consumers

BY SHAWNEE SMITH

NEW YORK—Discouraged by the uncertainty of getting radio and video exposure for new artists, George Saadi, a former artist-development manager, created "The Street Buzz," a monthly half-hour infomercial-style music program that showcases developing recording artists.

"I only call it an infomercial because that's the time slot it fills," says Saadi. The program airs during prime infomercial slots: Monday through Friday at 12 a.m. and Saturday at 8:30 a.m. PST.

"We have all these resources we devote to making music videos and [electronic press kits]," says Saadi, who formerly worked with EMI Music Distribution (EMD), which was then known as Cema. "I just considered the infomercial a natural extension."

Saadi twists the classic infomercial formula so that the program resembles a regular music video show, with a host who presents segments of band interviews, videos, live performance clips, and listings of tour dates.

"It really gives the label and artist total control over what image they want to project to the consumer," says Saadi. "It also allows them to control the frequency of artist and video exposure."

The show reaches approximately 20 million homes in the U.S. via Access TV, which owns time on the Discovery Channel, TNN, and public-access channels.

"I don't know exactly which channel it airs on in every region, but I've arranged with Access for ['The Street Buzz'] to be shown simultaneously across the country, so consumers can catch it at the same time every night. It's a normal part of the nightly program schedule."

The first episode of "The Street Buzz" aired in October 1995; it showcased Capitol modern rock act Radiohead. But Saadi took the program off the air after the first month to fine-tune it.

"The first program did pretty well, but I wanted to set up a direct response and a retail relationship so that consumers who liked the featured artists

could purchase the music," Saadi says.

To do so, he implemented a toll-free phone number (888-9STREET) and established a tie-in with retailer Sam Goody/Musicland.

"We got involved because it's a unique program that increases consumer awareness of new artists through an infomercial format with a high level of frequency," says Pam Schechtman, director of marketing for Sam Goody/Musicland. "Coupled with our pricing and positioning of the product with bin cards that replicate the identity of the show, we're hoping [the program] will break more bands and we'll see more sales."

Like an infomercial, "The Street Buzz" is interrupted with ads for featured bands and Sam Goody/Musicland.

Saadi's honed package—with its controlled exposure and prime pricing and positioning at Sam Goody/Musicland—enticed Capitol VP of sales Steve Rosenblatt to feature Butthole Surfers, the "Trainspotting" soundtrack, and Everclear on the second episode of "The Street Buzz," which aired in June.

Linda Adams, EMI senior director of marketing, chose to include Patti Rothberg and Fun Loving Criminals in the third episode of "The Street Buzz."

"It's a really balanced program that conceptually doesn't look like an infomercial. It looks more like a local video show," says Adams. "With pricing and positioning at Musicland, it's really a direct response to consumers. We're hoping that the program will develop a loyal audience."

The package for "The Street Buzz" will also include a World Wide Web site. Internet surfers can download video and concert shots, tour dates, and band information at www.streetbuzz.com.

Although only EMD acts have been featured on "The Street Buzz," Saadi feels that the program is too lucrative to be sustained by only one record label. He has received offers from other labels but says, "I'm trying to focus on the music I am familiar with, which at the moment is EMD artists."

the street
BUZZ