

Video Called Crucial to Wham!'s Stadium Success

BY PAUL GREIN

LOS ANGELES Wham!'s ability to headline stadiums on the strength of just one hit album underscores the impact of video, according to Jazz Summers, the group's co-manager.

"That's been a definite factor in why we've been able to do this," Summers says. "I'd be pretty silly to say it's because Wham!'s a megaband and because their music is so fabulous. Their music is fabulous, and they do attract a larger audience than most bands, but they've only been able to do that because of tv.

"With the advent of MTV, groups like Wham! and Tears For Fears go right into people's living rooms. That enables you to take short cuts in touring, record sales, media, everything.

"That's what's so silly about the conservatism of agents and promoters," Summers continues. "They say you have to play clubs and then step up to arenas and do that three times and then perhaps you can play stadiums. But tv and cable cut out all those steps.

"We always think that rock'n'roll is an outrageous business, but it's very conservative: People say, 'This is the way it's been done for years, so do it this way.'"

Summers acknowledges that his plan for Wham! to headline stadiums on its first major U.S. tour ran into opposition at two different agencies, Premier and later Triad.

"Any agent would try to push you to do a more conventional tour," he says. "They make more money out of it, for one thing. An arena would have meant more money for everybody, but that wasn't the object of the exercise. We achieved what we wanted to achieve: We played to the maximum amount of people in the minimum amount of time."

Summers says Wham! played before 302,568 fans in eight dates, grossing \$8.6 million. As for the net, he notes: "If we come out of it with about \$500,000, we'll be quite lucky." And he adds that without a crack tour accountant and other key participants, "We could have lost quite a lot of money on this tour."

Summers notes that because there aren't that many artists who

can play stadiums, there aren't that many accountants and tour managers who have experience in stadium shows. He singles out for praise tour accountant Hector Lazard (who also worked on the Prince tour), production manager Benny Collins and tour manager Jake Duncan.

While Wham!'s tour was considered a success—Summers says every date except Philadelphia sold out—it was carefully booked to avoid weekday shows.

"You can only play stadiums on weekends," Summers says. "I would be foolish to say we could do stadiums like Springsteen could in the middle of the week. We had to make it an event."

The shows also featured the Pointer Sisters (in Toronto, San Francisco and Miami) and Chaka Khan (in Los Angeles and Philadelphia), with Katrina & the Waves handling the warmup spot in most cities. Summers says he and Triad were looking for a more mature act for the second spot, which is why they ruled out New Edition and DeBarge.

"We didn't want to go out for that many kids," he says. "Everybody kind of lumps Wham! into that category, and there is a teen audience there, but there's a much broader audience. Every promoter said, 'Why don't you put New Edition on?,' which was exactly what we didn't want to do."

Summers notes that if Wham! were to play stadiums again, he would make one change and switch to reserved seating. "I think it got a little bit nasty at the front where the kids were getting crushed," he says. "Somebody advised us to do that this time, but we didn't want to lose the atmosphere. But in a huge area like that, when you've got 50,000 or 55,000 people, kids pack in and faint."

Summers says that Wham!'s next album will be released worldwide in April, and will be preceded by a single this November called "The Edge Of Heaven." The single is being released that far in front of the album, Summers says, because the band needs new product in the world outside of the U.S.

"We've concentrated on America almost solely this year because Wham! didn't break here on their first album as they did everywhere else. We haven't had a new single anywhere else since last Christmas, so we need to put some product out soon to narrow the gap."

Following the next Wham! album, group leader George Michael will record a solo album, which Summers expects in early 1987. Summers says Michael's solo album will be "more mature, more in an Elton John vein, which is not to say that the next Wham! album will be immature. In fact, it will be a bit tougher than 'Make It Big.'"

Summers adds that the film about Wham!'s trip to the People's Republic of China is in the rough-cut stage, and that he expects it to be released before Christmas. The 90-minute film is a joint venture between Wham! and CBS Records; CBS/Fox Video has videocassette rights following the film's planned theatrical release.

INSIDE TRACK

PIVOTAL OR MAYBE EVEN EPOCHAL might well describe the aftermath of the consecutive NARM rackjobber/one-stop conferences at the Registry in Scottsdale, Oct. 28-31, where these two important industry wholesaler groups will buttonhole home video and Compact Disc makers, seeking more profitable slices of the pie. Both segments feel they are hobbled by present pricing and/or status categories proffered by manufacturers. They'd like a price break on CDs, where they feel they can't compete with retailers. All currently pay the same price. Both groups will try to get more direct buying and/or distributor/subdistributor status from the prerecorded videocassette suppliers. One-stoppers have invited Ben Warren, VIP Home Entertainment, Inglewood, Calif., and Jim McGuinn, Hot Poop, Walla Walla, Wash., to provide insight on their independent retail operations.

SPEC'S MUSIC, the 16-store Martin Spector Florida chain nearing its fifth decade in the industry, has gone public. Underwriter Ladenburg & Thalmann of New York is offering 600,000 shares at \$6.50-\$7.50. The Spector family is selling none of its own stock... Ceres, Calif. Detective Bernie Roberts and a squad of 10 hit the local swap meet on Sept. 15, confiscating more than 11,000 mostly Latin tapes from a distributor and 10 booth operators. Police were assisted by private investigator Bud Richardson and his Assn. of Latin American Record Manufacturers associates... Watch for a criminal action on the West Coast soon against a major bogus tape distributor... Richard Foss and Robert Marin, now of Rhino Video and Sounds Good Music, were fined and penalized \$11,300 on two counts of selling bootleg Beatles and Black Sabbath LPs in November, 1982. In return for pleas of no contest, the L.A. City Attorney's office dismissed nine more counts of bootlegging and dismissed charges against firms for which they worked. An undercover policeman purchased 650 LPs containing previously unreleased material at a Pico Blvd. warehouse.

BUENO! BUENO! BUENO! Jose Jose did SRO business the weekend of Sept. 13 at Atlantic City's Tropicana Hotel. Jose Luis Rodriguez had 'em standing in line for his recent one-nighter at Las Vegas' Caesar's Palace. The latter is rushing an English-language album on the heels of the success of Julio Iglesias. Meanwhile, a fellow Venezuelan, Colina, is finishing his first English album for Sonotone in London. Iglesias takes a break from recording his second English album in the Bahamas to guest on 80-plus-year-old Pedro Vargas' imminent tv special via Televisa. And Ray Conniff is putting the final touches on his 74th album, "Campeones," one track of which will be the theme for next summer's World Cup soccer matches in Mexico City.

LONGTIME RETAILER Morty Marx has sold his Hollywood Fashion Center and Pompano Records to Musicland, keeping his huge North Miami Beach outlet... Look for Sam Attenberg and Herb Dorfman of Sine Qua Non to break into the prerecorded video biz... Track found Hugh Landy. He's left Athenia Corp. to form his own rep firm. Rumor has him acquiring an established rep firm... Track's tip of the topper to Dick Meixner, senior vice president, completing 25 consecutive years at ElectroSound... Lexicon Distributing, a division of Light Records, has acquired domestic distribution for Nissi Records from owner

Bob Cotton, along with Christian bookstore distribution for Enigma Records, the Hein brothers' label, and Exile, the Santa Ana line.

THE SIXTH ANNUAL KLON-FM Long Beach Blues Festival Sept. 14-15 drew 14,000, 1,000 more than 1984's event, with a cast including Bo Diddley, Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson, the Lee Allen Band, Jimmy Smith, Roomful Of Blues, the Blasters, Linda Hopkins, Joe Liggins & the Honeydrippers, Charlie Musselwhite, Papa John Creach, Albert Collins, Otis Rush and Willie Dixon. Tickets were \$13.50 to \$15.50 for the Public Broadcasting station's bash, which featured Bernie Pearl, the DJ whose three-hour weekly show sparked the concept... CBS Christmas stocking stuffer: Effective through Oct. 11, a 10% discount and January dating on the frontline catalog, with the exception of Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, Loverboy and Wham!'s current hit album. There's a 120-piece minimum and five of a line item... Motown Records made a clean sweep of the Detroit Music softball league for the second year in a row. The league also has teams from Harmony House, MCA and Capitol Records, the Handleman Co., Adrenalin (a local act soon to bow on MCA) and the Birmingham Bullets, Bob Seger's nine.

JIMI LaLUMIA of Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y. has started **Rockers Opposing Censorship** to raise funds for the American Civil Liberties Union's efforts to combat PMRC... Ron Berger is allowing the press to attend the Sept. 28-Oct. 5 confab of his National Video franchisees socially, but is banning them from attending business conferences... At presstime, K-tel International had received Bankruptcy Court okay to submit its plan of reorganization to creditors, after it reached agreement with its U.S. bank and unsecured creditors. Under the proposal, the company would continue business globally, except for Canada. Founder/chairman Phil Kives has committed to pump up to \$5 million into the firm. Don Nicholson of Minstar Inc. has been named senior VP and COO worldwide... Credit MCA Records and John Doremus Inc., the giant in-flight music provider, with an important cross-pollinating merchandising first. A promotion that began last December gave away 7,500 cassettes of the Oak Ridge Boys' "Greatest Hits II" on United Airlines flights which showed a specially produced video segment explaining a passenger contest, sweepstakes prize for which was a trip for two to Las Vegas to see the group in performance at the MGM Hotel... Watch for industry vet Joe Cerami, last with Dominion Music, the K-tel schlock wing, to open a national distribution firm... Kenny Fritz was unanimously elected president of the Conference of Personal Managers.

INDUSTRY HEAVIES Paul Wasserman, Danny Goldberg, Eric Gardner and his frau Janis, and John Mayall and his bride Maggie have lent their support to Pro Peace, an anti-nuke group which is planning a cross-country march next year. They were all set to appear at a musicians' briefing in L.A. Saturday (21)... Numerous top musicians also turned out Tuesday (15) at the Universal Amphitheatre to raise money to preserve the Santa Monica mountains and wildlife preserves. Don Henley, Tom Petty, Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne and Stevie Nicks all performed at the show, which raised \$100,000 for the effort. L.A. mayor Tom Bradley also attended. Edited by JOHN SIPPEL

Earlier Release For 'Ghostbusters'

NEW YORK RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video will be shipping "Ghostbusters" to distributors a week earlier than originally planned, moving out cassettes on Oct. 24 instead of the 31st.

The date was shifted for two key reasons, company executives say: to keep distributors from getting overloaded when they have to handle both "Beverly Hills Cop" and "Ghostbusters" at the same time, and to make sure "Ghostbusters" is in retail outlets by Halloween.

PolyGram Puts Maxi-Single on Hold

BY IS HOROWITZ

NEW YORK The maxi-single, a low-cost Compact Disc format scheduled for market introduction by PolyGram this fall, has fallen temporary victim of the CD pressing crunch. It will not appear until the first quarter of 1986 at the earliest, confirms Emiel Petrone, PolyGram's senior vice president, Compact Disc.

The format, conceived as the CD equivalent of a pop EP in playing time, was to have carried a dealer price tag enabling its resale to consumers at about \$6.50. A thinner

and more economical jewel box was developed to carry the item.

PolyGram's CD plant in Hanover, West Germany, is operating at peak capacity in a futile attempt to meet all the product demands of its own family of labels, while filling basic orders of key contract clients. No early catchup with the snowballing demand is anticipated, as hardware manufacturers continue to up their estimates of players to be sold on a worldwide basis.

Already, it is said, labels have racked up CD hits in this country alone totaling well over 100,000 units. This is double the amount

considered a major seller only about six months ago.

At PolyGram, as well as other major labels, title selection for release on CD has become much more selective as attempts are made to service consumers with hit product more adequately. This has left little room for experimenting with lower-priced goods for the time being.

PolyGram did release a limited number of "Popular-Price" CD titles under its London label, at some \$2 under the cost of regular CD product. But the company has abandoned further releases until the production bind eases.