

Band cuts, distributes own records

United Press International
NEW YORK — One Sunday afternoon, when Manhattan's garment and loft district was silent, the fourth floor Dreamland Studios were full of sound — very loud sound.

The occasion was a departure from the routine in the cramped booths. Mostly, Dreamland cuts "demo" tapes for rock and disco performers, or would-be performers. This was a full-fledged recording session.

U.S. Ape was cutting its own record.

Except in some Greenwich Village nightspots, U.S. Ape, is about as unknown as a rock group can get. But its members have dreams of fame and fortune.

"It happened to the B-52s," said Tom Goodkind, 23. He writes the songs, sings lead, plays bass guitar, and is "fronting the project."

"The B-52s are a band from

Athens, Ga. They cut their own record. It sold 10,000. They became the rage in Greenwich Village — so hot they were signed by Warner's."

"Now there are a whole bunch of people making records for themselves," said Gary Dorfman, rock guitarist turned recording studio operator. "This is the place where it can happen for a lot of the new wave bands. The Dots made their own, got some radio play on it, sold a fair amount of records."

"It's so hard to get a major record label to listen to your band without an incredible rep. A lot won't listen to unsolicited tapes."

"But, if you put out a record on your own, and it sells, gets played, maybe they'll hear it, give it a chance."

That's why U.S. Ape cut its first record a year ago — "a one-track tape we had pressed into a single." The first company they had pressed the record was raided as a record pirate just as the group arrived to pick up copies of the record. After convincing authorities they had nothing to do with the outfit's illicit operations, Goodkind and friends got another firm to press 2,000 copies they then sold door to door. Later, a small independent distributor took them on.

"We learned from the experience," said Goodkind. "This time we're much more professional."

Shauna Laurie, 23, of Boston, who also sings, was playing a three keyboard organ.

Goodkind, Marty Maniak, 23, of

Buffalo, N.Y., lead guitarist, and Paul Richards, 22, Grandville, Ohio, drummer, sprawled about the control booth listening, their faces studious in concentration.

Peter Lewis twisted dials at the control board — mixing Shauna's playing into the group's music, playing it back. There would be a discussion, sometimes heated. Then it would be mixed again.

Goodkind looked at his watch. Studio rental was \$25 an hour. Uptown, the fees range up from \$175, Dorfman said. But this was still big money for Ape, even if Lewis, an engineer with a well-known studio weekdays, was there as a volunteer on his own time.

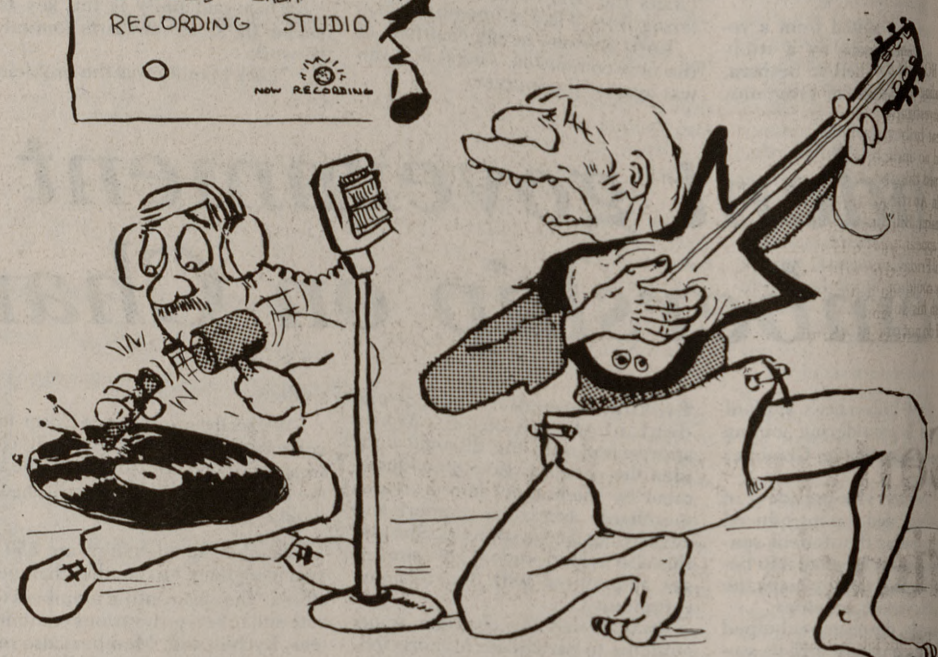
"This is out of the mainstream of pressures and craziness of the expensive operations," Lewis said. "It's relaxing for me, trying to help them out."

"The Knack spent \$15,000 on their latest album," said Goodkind. "Then it went platinum, sold a million." Compare that, he said, with the \$400,000 spent to produce the more established Supertramp's latest album.

Ape's effort, "Ignorance is Bliss," is far more modest, even than The Knack's. An extended play record, it carries three songs, two on one side, one on the other. Production cost about \$2,000, everything counted. Trade and barter covered some costs. Recording is on eight tracks instead of the 24 or more used by established groups.



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But that's the new wave trend, letting the music speak for itself, said Dorfman, who became fascinated with the recording process and opened this studio with a friend, Steve Rosenthal.

"It's not like the days of Tin Pan Alley," he said. "Then, you could walk in with sheet music. In the '60s, you could make a tape on a recorder in your house and send it to a record company."

"That's still the musician's dream. But it's not the reality. The record companies, they want a group with a live show rep and a record before they'll think about a contract."

Uptown, at Casablanca, a label ranked first in a recent issue of the

trade journal Billboard, Irv Beigel, vice president for East Coast operations, reviews demos submitted by rock groups.

Regarding talk some labels don't listen to demo tapes, he said, "I imagine there are some companies that don't, but we do listen. That's how you find new talent."

Do the likes of U.S. Ape and The Dots have a better chance going the do-it-yourself production route?

"You know it's funny. That's how I met Neil Bogart (Casablanca's president who makes final decisions on the West Coast). Some years ago, we were working for different companies. There was this group, Question Mark and the Mysterians. They cut a record. Distributed it them-

selves in the Michigan area. On their own, they sold 60,000 in the Midwest. After he picked it up, it sold for a million."

"You remember it, '66? These kids, I just want to see them. There's always a chance they're determined enough, and hustle, the best are going to be a giant in this business."

Back in Dreamland, Goodkind talked about the concert dates he was organizing, the stores he'd talked into carrying record, plans to appear at design records.

"This is it, our big push. We're going to make it this time."

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'83 council organizes... It's time once more for fresh to flood the flower shops and wear rentals — the Class of '83 on the way. Scheduled for Feb. 22, the will be from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. on the second floor of the Memorial Center. Crystal Image, a rock band from Austin, will provide the music. Tickets, which cost \$8 per person, are on sale at the Rudder Tower office and in the MSC main hall. Class president Dan Stehman expects "a pretty good turnout" to the dance, which he says will cost class slightly over \$3,000. "We plan to make a fair profit put into the class treasury," Stehman said. He said more than 200 tickets have already been sold.

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