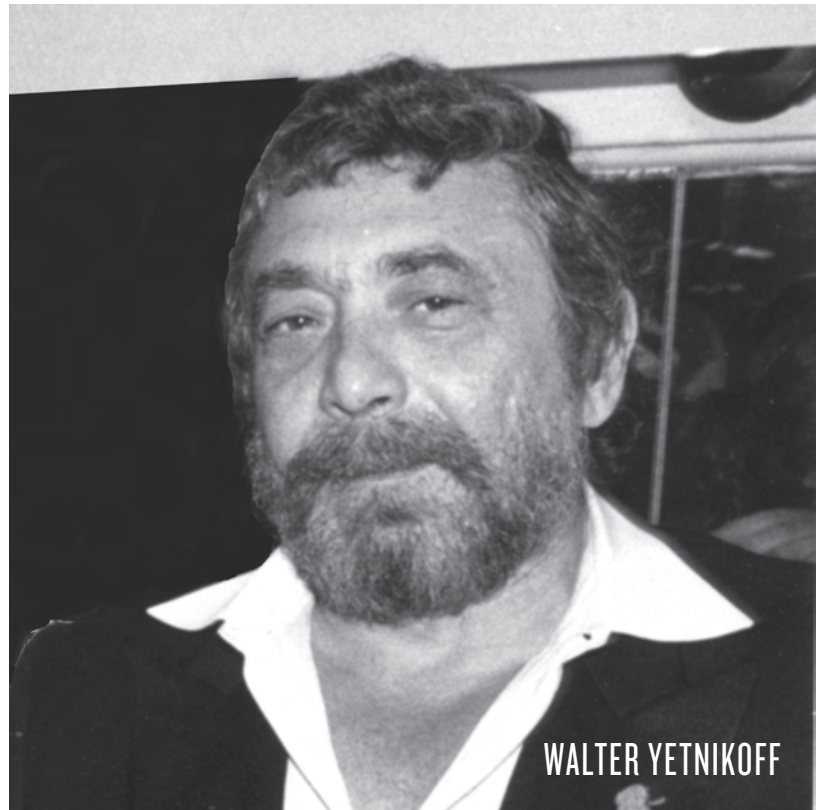


# Another Brick IN THE WALL

By Dennis Lavinthal, as told to David Adelson  
Excerpted from the forthcoming book *High & Inside*

## THE RISE AND FALL OF INDEPENDENT PROMOTION, AND THE BIRTH OF **HITS** MAGAZINE



WALTER YETNIKOFF

### 1980: The Indies, Pink Floyd, LA Radio and Dick Asher's BOYCOTT

**F**redric Dannen opened his music industry expose *Hit Men* with a chapter he titled “The Education of **Dick Asher**.” The episode described in the chapter is a fascinating one; but Dannen got it wrong. Here’s the real story of the rise and fall of independent promotion.

There were only two majors in 1980—**Steve Ross’ Warner Elektra Atlantic** and **Walter Yetnikoff’s CBS** dominated the marketplace, controlling over 50% of the business between them. CBS Deputy President Dick Asher and **Warner Bros. Records** Chairman/CEO **Mo Ostin** were determined to stop using independent promoters to get their records played at radio. Both Asher and Ostin had seen their indie promo budgets explode, and they instructed their people not to pay the indies. Other labels’ executives didn’t like paying the

indies, either, but they didn’t want to risk hurting their records by supporting Asher and Ostin’s boycott. On the other hand, executives at smaller labels like **Arista, Chrysalis, Motown, Capricorn, RSO, United Artists, Bang** and **A&M** appreciated the indies for helping to provide them with the means to break through and thus level the playing field.

It was never much of a contest. The indies were making too much money to let Asher and Ostin muscle them out. They did everything they could to slow or bury CBS and WB’s records during the boycott. According to former indie promoter **Dennis Lavinthal**, the task wasn’t that difficult to accomplish. “We just worked the other records, and Mo and Dick’s records fell to the bottom of the stack. CBS President Walter Yetnikoff, who was a fan of the indies and had close relationships with many of us, did his best to help undermine the boycott. Walter loved the power of pushing the indie button at will (it