



by Ed Christman

Track™

NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK: When BMG Distribution convenes in the new year (beyond press time), the company is going to be a different place. Most of the senior management structure that has been guiding it for the past decade is gone—although, to be sure, company president **Pete Jones** still has his hand firmly on the wheel.

Jones' new management team consists of **Bob Morelli** (who, sources say, has been named senior VP of associated labels, marketing, and branch operations) and **Rick Wilcoxon**, who has been named senior VP of sales. Previously, Morelli was senior VP of associated labels, and Wilcoxon was VP of national sales.

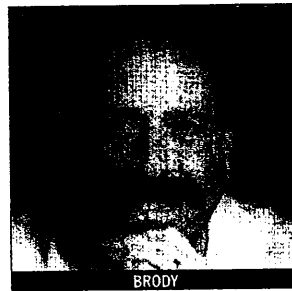
Gone are **Rick Bleiweiss**, senior VP of marketing and branch operations, and **Rick Cohen**, VP of national sales. Similarly, VP of branch operations **Tom O'Flynn** has been relocated to the BMC Heritage operation, which will function as a reissue label, as well as overseeing the sales of the company's catalog. Prior to the surprise departures of Bleiweiss and Cohen, several other executives left BMG due to the corporate-mandated, companywide downsizing, including senior VP of new media and business development **Sami Valkonen**, senior VP of operations **Pete Paulson**, and VP of legal and business affairs **Denis Kellman**.

For the same reason, two branch managers in the field are gone: **Bob Bean**, who headed the Detroit branch, and **Charlie Brown**, who headed the Seattle one. They have been replaced by, respectively, **Diane Steffens** (formerly the Washington, D.C., marketing manager) and **Len Rokosz** (the Seattle branch's marketing manager). Atlanta sales manager **Graham Edmonds** has left the company—as have Boston marketing manager **Nancy Flynn** and San Francisco sales manager **Charlie Clendenon**. The latter sales office has been shut down, with staffers there working out of their homes.

MAJOR POSSIBILITIES: In what could be a big developing story this year, Wal-Mart is once again said to be studying the issue of buying music directly from the majors. It began this dialogue at last year's National Assn. of Recording Merchandisers annual convention and pursued discussions on the topic for a few months before letting it drop. But sources say the world's largest retailer is once again doing research on the issues related to making such a decision. The majors appear to be split about whether or not they want to deal directly with Wal-Mart, which can move tonnage but is not known for being gentle with its suppliers. And of course, there is no word on what Anderson Merchandising and Handleman think of such a move.

MISLABELED: Sony Music Distribution appears to have had a slight manufacturing problem with the packaging of the **Nas** album. According to New York City-based independent merchants, the company apparently mislabeled one shipment of the album with the parental advisory sticker, but that shipment contained the "clean" version. Consequently, independent stores that got the mislabeled **Nas** album were inundated with returns of the title. Meanwhile, New York City was a big portion of the street-date violations on the title, with merchants there selling 2,000 of the 3,500 units counted by Sound-Scan in the week prior to its release.

BIG VISION: **Jeff Brody**, who heads up JRB Sales and Marketing Innovations in Holmdel, N.J., tells Retail Trak that he "has signed a deal that will allow my company to bring labels to Red for distribution." As part of the deal, Brody has formed the JRB Label Group, which will act as the sales and marketing arm for labels that it brings to Red.



BRODY

MAKING TRACKS: **Larry Weiss**, executive VP of operations at WEA Inc., the parent of the WEA distribution entity, is retiring from the company after 26 years of service. Operations will now report to **Mike White**, executive VP of administration, general counsel, and operations at WEA Inc.

JOB FAIR: The following individuals are seeking new opportunities: **Denis E. Kellman**, former VP of business and legal affairs at BMG Distribution. He may be reached at 845-986-8328 or at debalowarwick.net.

Andrew Klein, former sales director for Ellipsis Arts & the Relaxation Co. (718-264-1139).

Ron DiMatteo, Northeast regional sales manager for DNA (516-921-3843).

Helene Gurin, the former sales representative with BMG Distribution most recently handling the New York stores of Virgin Megastore and HMV (hbg18@hotmail.com).

Bill Gerstein, Northeast One-Stop COO (518-348-1288/wgerst7354@aol.com).