

ONSTAGE : Sharing the Spirit
Music industry mover and shaker Hale Milgrim
joins Lobero Theatre Foundation celebration 'Quips and Clips'

By Brett Leigh Dicks, NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

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'QUIPS AND CLIPS'

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

Where: Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St.

Information: 963-0761, lobero.com

One suspects that even performing arts advocate Giuseppe "Jose" Lobero would be a little surprised at the legacy he put in motion. Since first opening its doors in 1873, the Lobero Theatre has held the distinction of being the longest continuously operating theater in California. It has seen everyone from Clark Gable to Jeff Bridges and Ingrid Bergman to Patty Griffin grace its stage and has been home to a number of local performing arts organizations, including Community Arts Music Association, State Street Ballet and Sings Like Hell.

On Saturday night, the Lobero Theatre Foundation, which has managed the theater's programming and commercial affairs since 1938, will offer a special thank you to the donors, volunteers and patrons who have helped entrench its diverse and rich program so vividly within the local community. Local music and arts advocate Hale Milgrim will help with this process when he reaches deep into his extensive music video archives and personal experiences to present a second installment of "Quips and Clips."

The collection Milgrim will draw from stems out of a musical evolution like few others. Milgrim started his career behind the counter of a local record store, and music has taken him on a head-spinning journey through a succession of positions at major record labels, which eventually led to his helming Capitol Records. Since returning to Santa Barbara, he has worked with various local musical outlets and currently maintains a presence on the airwaves as a broadcaster at KTYD. As diverse as these experiences have been, they're all unified by Milgrim's unadulterated passion for music.

"Even when I was very young, I wanted to hear things before anyone else did," Milgrim enthused. "I was so passionate about it that, even at an early age, I knew music was going to be the driving force of whatever I was going to do, but never knowing where it would all lead and never thinking that it could possibly lead to running a record company. It was all about discovering new music and surrounding myself with people I appreciated and respected, and that happened my entire life, no matter whether I was working at Discount Records in Isla Vista or running Capitol Records."

Having moved from managing Discount Records to the distribution arm of Warner-Elektra-Atlantic, and after an eight-year tenure at Warner Bros. Records, Milgrim was drawn to New York when Bob Krasnow took control of the Elektra/Asylum/Nonesuch Records. Not only was he part of the label's reinvention, but he was also part of the changing face of music marketing. Artists such as Jackson Browne, Metallica, The Cure, Gypsy Kings and 10,000 Maniacs broke through not only as the result of radio exposure, but also through their dedication and development within the live arena. It's a promotional model that now defines music.

After some 25 years in the music industry, Milgrim received a call from Joe Smith, the chairman of EMI Music North America, who offered him the position of president at Capitol Records. He inherited an enviable roster that included the likes of Sir Paul McCartney, The Beach Boys, Bob Seger and Tina Turner. Under Milgrim's watch, the label took on and found success with artists as diverse as Bonnie Raitt, MC Hammer, Mazzy Star and Radiohead.

Despite the massive success of such artists, perhaps Milgrim's greatest musical satisfaction resides with Dire Straits. The initial release of its debut album met with little commercial enthusiasm, but Milgrim and his colleagues at Warner Bros. kept a watchful eye on the album. So, with Sales and Promotion Chief Ed Rosenblatt's support, they dedicated themselves to the task for almost a year.

"Then a radio station in San Jose started playing 'Sultans of Swing,'" Milgrim recalled. "Retailers in the Bay Area then started selling the album. It ended up selling almost 2 million copies. It was one of the greatest things to happen for them because it took about 10 months to get the ball rolling. It was quite an explosion. Usually you're building on a base and helping an artist go from 30,000 to 50,000 to 100,000 sales. But to have a group from England and the opportunity to really do artist development and spend money and shepherd them through to that kind of success was an amazing experience."

After his tenure at Capitol Records, Milgrim returned to Santa Barbara, where he has worked within the local venues such as the Santa Barbara Bowl and SOHO. He also has a weekly radio program — "Go to Hale" — on KTYD each Sunday morning, where he continues to turn people on to fresh music. And that's what will fuel his "Quips and Clips" undertaking. Not only will it introduce the audience to a range of underappreciated yet thoroughly deserving artists, but it will also reveal a few hidden gems from familiar names. The chance to do it within the iconic Lobero will make it all the more special.

"There are many places in the country that have a theater of this size, but few of them have the history of the Lobero," Milgrim mused. "We are very fortunate to have so many artists visit a town our size. When I left a major corporation and moved back to Santa Barbara, I realized that doing things locally is even more fulfilling than doing things on a grander scale. Bigger isn't always better, and I have found that by being involved in things a little more local and tied into our community."