

## Rock and roll:

*It's a 10,000-1 chance  
at making it big, but . . .*

If you are under 30 and a millionaire, chances are you are a rock musician. On the other hand, if you are a rock musician the chances are you are broke.

Carl Bressler is 20, pragmatic, and expects to make his fortune in rock and roll.

Is it so outlandish a dream? The pop music industry today is bigger in dollar volume than motion pictures, television, advertising or publishing.

Elton John earns \$7 million annually and has sold 42 million albums. Carl Bressler's band members make about \$50 a week.

WORKING OUT OF half a rented office in Birmingham, with a partly

completed recording studio getting under way in Royal Oak, their distance from the big money in the music business gives their aspiration an air of pretension. And yet . . .

"I'd say there is about one chance in 10,000 of an individual band making the big time," Bressler said.

"There are about 25,000 bands working in California alone. Maybe four or five get famous in a whole state. It's tricky. The public forgets fast."

He speaks with the authority of someone who has spent four years now on the under side of the music business.

"The main thing I have going for me is my mouth," he says with characteristic candor. His talent for pro-

motion got him his first job representing a rock group when he was 16.

Since then he has built up a small clientele of virtually unknown groups, some of which have attained local distinction, and most of which stay working, but none has hit it big.

"I think this one has what it takes. A group may be good musicians, or good showmen, but it is rare to find both," he said.

The group is called "Astigafa." The band finds work at local spots such as the Coral Gables on Woodward Ave., the bars in Grand Rapids and East Lansing. They have been the group which "also played" in concerts behind some of the big-time acts.

Astigafa plays a "light rock" music which Bressler compares to the "Beachboys." He admires their musicianship and their ability to write and arrange their own songs.

"But the reason I stick with them is I think they have a chance . . . It's not love."

THE CHANCE is part of Bressler's whole idea of making both himself and the band a success. He works in the world of contracts, percentages and hotel reservations, a role which keeps him close to the music, but also keeps him at some distance from the glory.

"Sometimes it gets to you," he said. "But if everything is working right, everyone respects everyone else."

He is specific about plans for the group, and rock promotion in general. "People make promises. Sometimes they don't keep them. That's why we decided to go into it ourselves."

A rock bar pays about \$1,000-\$1,500 a week for a group. Split between the band members, with the overhead knocked off, it sometimes dwindles to about \$50 a week. "But you need the exposure," Bressler said.

The band is supporting an investment in a recording studio also called Astigafa. Approximately \$25,000 worth of equipment may eventually become a profitable sideline. The studio is equipped to make demonstration tapes and records for a \$15 an hour fee.

"It's cheap compared to other studios," sound engineer Ronald Sussman said.

Recording rock music is something more than putting a microphone in front of the band. Each instrument is recorded separately, then "mixed" electronically.

The resulting electronic mixture creates a distinctive "sound" for the group, and one of the curiosities of music as a business.

"You can get some special effect which is the 'hook' which sells the record," Bressler said. The result is "trade secrets," which include a blanket stuffed in back of a bass drum or a microphone placement which no one else can duplicate.

He feels Sussman is master of the technique.



Dick Coulson takes a break at a session.



Carl Bressler is looking at the future.

The point to the recording studio is mainly promotion. "I can point to some local sales figure when I start dealing with the record companies. It gives you something solid to point to."

The band, which has been together for four years, works on sharpening its stage show, working on the recording, and playing a steady round of the bars.

Joe Beshouri, Dick Coulson, Steve Smeekins, Zip Picard, Dan Logan, Gary Sussman and Marshall Crenshaw are the musicians. Paul Stanley is business manager. Richard Lee is road manager. Bressler is handling promotion.

THE FUTURE is the thing. "It's all a kind of investment in time. If the band makes it, then it's going to be worth it."

"The way you get to the top in this business is either to start with a band and keep with them, or start with the big guys and steal one."

"I don't like to really hype an act if it hasn't got it."

The idea is to present some solid entertainment, some good music. The band and the rest of Astigafa are in their 20's. Elton John is 28. Elver-Presley is 40.

You have to start somewhere.

## Still developing

# At 82, George Wellington Smith hasn't slowed



George Wellington Smith is living near Gaylord.

Time may have forgotten Franklin Village, but time hasn't slowed George Wellington Smith, the developer who graded Woodward Ave. and was responsible for creating many area subdivisions.

Smith today is 82 and living near Gaylord. He married the former Mrs. Sam Lawson last year, and is in the process of developing "Wilderness Valley," a 1,200-acre tract in Cheboygan county.

His latest project has been developed around an 18-hole golf course and 10-acre estates. He is also planning Pigeon River Woods for another recreational resort.

"I came here to plant trees, not to cut them down," he said, referring to a reforestation project now totalling 600,000 trees.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith are living in a log house in Wilderness Valley overlooking land that was once covered with stumps and flooded by beaver dams.

"I commenced clearing the stumps and dead trees, to find a small stream. After dynamiting a trench 600 feet long, I found enough water to start dredging by dragline. The result was a lake a half mile long across the valley. I used the spoils from dred-

ing to build up the hills you see now," he said.

Smith's first project in the mid-1920's was the grading of Woodward Ave. from Birmingham to Pontiac, one of the first super-highways.

Later he was to develop Franklin Village, in 1925; Wood Creek Farms in Farmington Hills, in 1937; Quaker Valley in 1938; Meadowlake Farms in Bloomfield Hills and Powderhorn estates in West Bloomfield.

A native of Port Huron, he was one of eight children.

He quit school in seventh grade. "There were just too many business projects I wanted to under take."

At the age of 14, he was selling trees and shrubbery for a nursery in Cleveland.

He began manufacturing aircraft exhaust systems in World War II, founding Smith-Morris Corp., of Ferndale. The firm is still being run by his sons, Mark and Bruce.

He has 11 grandchildren, and has named 11 forests at Wilderness Valley after each one. "I think it will take a long time to replant and regrow Michigan's forests destroyed by lumbermen and fire. I would hope to live long enough to do my share of the replanting and regrowing," he said.