

# An International Success Story

## 50 Years of the Music-Publishing Company Melodie der Welt

by Uwe Schleifenbaum\*



Johann Michel  
founder of the publishing company



Pamela Michel  
General Manager of Melodie der Welt

On November 1st, 1951, Melodie der Welt (Melody of the World) was heard for the first time: Dr. Otto Blau, owner of the Josef Weinberger publishing company, Dr. Veit Wyler, as representative of Maurice Rosengarten, and Johann Michel, previously employed by the Viennese music publisher Doblinger and manager of Josef Weinberger since 1946, jointly established the pop-music publishing company, Melodie der Welt. Johann Michel devised the company name, and since the word pop music had not yet been invented in year 1951, Melodie der Welt sees itself as a publisher of Schlager (hit tunes). "The task given to me," says Johann Michel, was "managing and effectively exploiting" the repertoire brought in by the partners in Germany". However, this is more easily said than done since "even back then, the development of a publisher's catalogue was dependent upon the goodwill of the record and film industry". In any case, the original capital soon ran low. However, rescue arrived in the form of composer Horst Heinz Henning: His evocative piece *Es wird ja alles wieder gut* (Everything Will Be Fine Again) (Helmut Andrae/Horst Heinz Henning) became the first big success for the young music-publishing house.

At the beginning of the Fifties, music was far removed from the social and economic status that it enjoys today. Johann Michel made a virtue of necessity: On his own initiative, he searched for German and Austrian authors. Among his early discoveries were the Frankfurt pianist and later successful author Karl Götz, as well as Hans Lang and Hans Werner. In October of 1953, Johann Michel moved for good from Vienna to Frankfurt, and Melodie der Welt became a full member of GEMA. In 1958, Johann Michel acquired the Viennese Edition Scala and thereby secured the rights to *In einer kleinen Konditorei* (In a Little Cafe) by Fred Raymond and Ernst Neubach.

In 1959, Johann Michel opened the door to the most important music market in the world, the USA. The acquisition of *Yes Sir, That's My Baby* (Walter Donaldson/Gus Kahn) from the New York publisher Bourne Co. laid the foundation for one of the longest-running and most successful international collaborations entered into by Melodie der Welt. Successful in Germany: *Mamatschi* (Oskar Schima/F. X. Kappus). Johann Michel acquired the sub-publishing rights from the Viennese music publisher Ludwig Krenns. The hit of the year 1959: *Hier am Rhein geht die Sonne nicht unter* (The Sun Doesn't Set Here on the Rhine) (Toni Hämmerle). After some rather quiet years, Gerhard Wendland succeeded in making an incredible comeback with the number *Tanze mit mir in den Morgen* (Mitternachtstango) (Dance with Me into the Morning - Midnight Tango). The biggest success of the year 1961 for Melodie der Welt, a song

composed by Karl Götz and Kurt Hertha reached the top of the German hit parade. 1963: The company of Michael Jary was acquired. Hit of the year 1963: *Ich kauf' mir lieber einen Tirolerhut* (I'd Rather Buy Myself a Tyrolean Hat) (Charly Niessen/Franz Rüger). Hits of the year 1964: *Ich bin kein Eskimo* (I'm Not an Eskimo); *Kavalier, Kavalier* (Gentleman, Gentleman); *Wenn die Cowboys träumen* (When Cowboys Dream) (Karl Götz/Günter Loose).

## Proud Catalogue

Professor Robert Stolz (which means "proud" in English) - one of the most successful composers of the 20th century - transferred the administration of his publishing business Edition Rex Yvonne L. Stolz Verlag KG to Johann Michel in 1966. The best-known titles in this catalogue: *Im Prater blüh'n wieder die Bäume* (The Trees Are Blooming Again in Prater) (Robert Stolz/Kurt Robitscheck), *Verliebte muss man gar nicht erst in Stimmung bringen* (Lovers Don't Have to Be Put into the Mood) (Robert Stolz/Arthur Rebner) from the musical comedy *Frühling in Wien* (Springtime in Vienna), as well as *Ungeküsst sollst Du nicht schlafen geh'n* (You Shouldn't Go to Sleep without a Kiss) (Robert Stolz/Rudolf Bertram) and *Wien wird schön erst bei Nacht* (Vienna Becomes Beautiful Only at Night) (Robert Stolz/Wilhelm Sterk).

A highlight of the year 1967 was the signing of a long-term sub-publishing contract (until 1994) with America's no. 1 country publisher, Tree Publishing Co. in Nashville. In 1968, Alexandra succeeded in breaking through with Zigeunerjunge (Gypsy Boy) (Hans Blum) and her distinctive alto voice. Melodie der Welt also published the subsequent number Auf dem Wege nach Odessa (On the Way to Odessa) (Hans Blum/Fred Weyrich). With the acquisition of the sub-publishing rights for the catalogues of Blue Seas/Jac Music in 1968, Johann Michel established another significant stake in the American market: one of the most important American author teams, Burt Bacharach and Hal David.

Johann Michel was able to close a long-term deal for Germany, Austria and Switzerland with Lionel Conway, the general manager of Island Music Ltd., London, during the 1970 MIDEM. From that time on, Melodie der Welt published the English catalogues of the Island Records label. It also began publishing the repertoire of the US subsidiaries Island Music Inc., Ackee and Ufo Music Inc. in 1976.

## **New Partners from the Island**

The year 1971 had outstanding significance for the foreign activities of Melodie der Welt. Johann Michel and Micky Most agreed on long-term publishing co-operation (which still exists today) with the goal of optimally exploiting the repertoire of RAK Publishing Ltd., London, in the German-language area. This was the beginning of a unique success story. Most produced artists like Jeff Beck, Donovan, Herman's Hermits and Lulu, as well as the early successes of the Animals. He was solely responsible for 27 hits by Hot Chocolate that were released on the RAK label. In addition, Most brought on board the authors and producers Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman, with whom Johann Michel wrapped up another major deal: From November 1st, 1971 until the end of December 1983, the repertoire published by Chinnichap Publishing Ltd. was exploited in Germany, Austria and Switzerland by Melodie der Welt. Chinnichap developed into one of the most successful songwriter teams of all times. With teen attractions like Sweet, New World, Mud, Suzi Quatro and Smokie, they struck achord with young listeners.

The hit of the year 1972: Michaela (Jean Frankfurter/Robert Puschmann/Werner Krisch). With My Love and The Mess, Lee Eastman, New York, transferred songs by Paul & Linda McCartney to the Inter Music Johann Michel KG, which is part of the Melodie der Welt group, for the first time. In 1983, these songs were passed on to McCartney's newly established publishing company MPL Music Verlags-GmbH, which Melodie der Welt administered.

Another co-operation arose in 1975: Larry Shayne, an American film-music supervisor, and Johann Michel began working together. Larry Shayne transferred the sub-publishing rights of his catalogues with high-calibre authors like Henry Mancini, Jay Livingston, Ray Evans, Johnny Mercer and Al Stillman to Compass Musik GmbH, which is managed by Melodie der Welt.

The hit of the year 1976: Kleine Kneipe (Little Pub) (Michael Kunze). In September 1977, Udo Jürgens, his manager Freddy Burger and Johann Michel agreed to a publishing deal. As the sub-publisher of Aran Productions AG, Melodie der Welt and Musikverlag Johann Michel, a subsidiary of Melodie der Welt, would manage the future repertoire of Udo Jürgens in many countries of the world. The hit of the year 1977: Das bisschen Haushalt ... sagt mein Mann (The Little Bit of Housework ... Says My Husband) (Hans Bradtke/Henry Meyer). From 1977 to 1991, the Famous publishing group (the New York music-publishing company of the media concern Paramount Pictures Corp., Los Angeles) was represented in Germany and Austria by Melodie der Welt. The Famous catalogue proved to be a veritable gold mine since it included the rights to world-famous film soundtracks.

After lengthy and intensive negotiations, an agreement was signed in 1979: Melodie der Welt would represent the Mighty Three publishing group of Philadelphia from the cradle of the Philly Sound as of January 1st. Edition Supra - established in 1956 by Will Glahé - became part of MdW publishing group in 1979. From 1980 to 1989, Melodie der Welt administered the repertoire of Hit & Run Music Publishing Limited, which included the compositions of former and current members of Genesis: Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks and Peter Gabriel.

## **Paul Woitschach Radio-Musikverlag**

In 1980, Johann Michel took over the Paul Woitschach Radio-Musikverlag publishing company and its affiliated firm, Imperator, as well as the music publisher R. G. Gnauck. Paul Woitschach, whose company was founded in Berlin in 1955, was very active in the field of concert, light, dance and wind music. His potpourris should also be mentioned: Still today, they are played frequently by spa and pop orchestras.

In November 1980, Melodie der Welt acquired the copyrights to all of the titles of Günter B. Merkel's SWP Südwest Promotion Musikverlag. The SWP publishing catalogue, which includes the works of prominent German rock musicians such as Eloy, King Ping Meh, Jane and Fargo, now has its own identity within the MdW organisation under the name of Edition Rock Melody.

After acquiring shares in the company, the headquarters of the publishing group Rheinische Musikverlage were moved from Cologne on the Rhine to Frankfurt on the Main in 1982. The Otto Kuhl Musikverlag publishing

company, named after its founder, had become a member of GEMA back in 1925. The focus of this publisher at that time was on high-quality light music.

In 1985, initial discussions with Bernhard Mikulski took place. In the following summer, an agreement was reached that led to extremely successful co-operation in the field of dance music. Melodie der Welt concluded contracts with Clive Calders' Zomba Enterprises and Willesden Music Inc. in 1986. The catalogues included copyrights of such established artists as Def Leppard, Billy Ocean, Samantha Fox, Tangerine Dream and Womack & Womack.

In the Seventies, Cyril Shane, the former general manager of Shapiro Bernstein in London, had already initiated the contact between Johann Michel and Dick Vollter, then president of Shapiro Bernstein Co. Inc. in New York. Through the years, a very personal relationship developed, which also extended to Johann Michel's staff. Michael Brettler, grandson of Dick Vollter, son of Leon and Jacqueline Brettler, and today the president of the family-owned publishing group established in 1913, signed a general sub-publishing agreement with Melodie der Welt at the start of 1990.

Melodie der Welt, Eric Woolfson and Brian Brolly founded Edition Freudiana to exploit the musical of the same name about the Viennese psychoanalyst. With one exception, the music and words for the songs were written by Eric Woolfson; the German texts are by Lida Winiewicz and the producer is Alan Parsons.

## Change of Management

At the beginning of 1997, Pamela Michel joined the management of Melodie der Welt, replacing Wolfgang Mewes, who went into well-deserved retirement on December 31st, 1997 after more than 40 years of successful and dedicated work for the publishing company. With Pamela Michel, the company policies underwent a decisive change with a new focus on signing national author teams to the firm. In addition to cultivating the long-standing contacts and partnerships from the era of Johann Michel and Wolfgang Mewes, she was soon signing contracts with some talented newcomers, as well as with established German author and producer teams.

The collaboration with Leiber & Stoller began in 1997. Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller are considered the style-setting producers/songwriters of the Fifties and early to be Sixties, responsible for such classics as Jail House Rock, Poison Ivy, Love Potion No. 9, Charlie Brown and Stand By Me. As established producers, Leiber & Stoller supported successful author teams such as Gerry Goffin/Carole King, Barry Mann/Cynthia Weil, Doc Pomus/Mort Shuman and Jeff Barry/Ellie Greenwich. At the beginning of 1998, Melodie der Welt started working with Martin Stock. The co-operation with Edition Arts Of Toyco and its creative head, Andy Knotte also began in 1998. Gino Trovatiello and Matthias Stingl, owners of the Tube Studios and very well established in terms of advertising music, founded Edition Ecco Songs, which has been managed since mid-1999 by Melodie der Welt. Siggie Brandt followed them with Edition Diabolo during the course of the year 2000.

In May 2000, another important co-operation between Cologne and Frankfurt developed: Alexa Gref and Michael Loeb signed an administration contract for the company WWF Wort & Ton GmbH with Melodie der Welt. In 2001, a classic Schlager singer once again performed for Germany at the Grand Prix Eurovision de la Chanson: Michelle was able to prevail in the preliminary qualifying round in Hanover against media hypes like Big Brother resident Zlatko and terrier-friend Rudolph Moshhammer. In the final qualifying round in Copenhagen, her song *Wer Liebe lebt* (When You Live Love) (Gino Trovatiello/Matthias Stingl/Eva Richter), co-published by Ecco Songs and Edition Diabolo, achieved a notable 8th place; the song also made Number 32 in the German singles charts. The winners of this year's Schlager Grand Prix come from Estonia: Tanel Padar & Dave Benton with the title *Everybody*.

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